

“ I AM MYSELF THE SUBJECT OF MY BOOK ”

*Montaigne.*

By

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## PREFACE

The purpose of this little book, as well as the "secret of the Dedication," will be found to be explicitly stated in *An Understamped Letter*, which is one of the *Essays* that follow. It is needless for me, therefore, to repeat the same here. Some of my Readers have already seen eight of these essays in print, in the Holkar College Magazine, and elsewhere. The rest were written during the past few months of my illness, and appear, for the first time in print, in this volume.

I am acquainted with no satisfactory definition of the *Essay*. It shows such a bewildering variety of types that all attempts at defining it, must, of necessity, end in failure. I have read some standard works on the subject, and have tried to understand what the *Essay* really means; but, I must confess, at the end of every such effort, I found myself arriving at

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the strange conclusion that there is, independently, no such thing as the *Essay*! The informing or vitalizing personality of the writer has always seemed to me to be the *central fact* which, in the process of artistic self-revelation assumes a protean variety of forms and shapes, such as an impression, a reminiscence, a scrap of auto-biography, an anecdote, a diary, a character-sketch, a vision, a dream, a reverie, a statement of personal taste, opinion, judgment or prejudice. I am content to regard the *Essay* as merely an artistic attempt of a writer to express himself in any one of these or similar forms, as distinct from all such wherein he tries to epitomize the fruits of his learning or diligent study, such as lectures, monographs, theses, studies, etc. To me, at any rate, this seems to be the least unsatisfactory explanation; and I have called my "little ones," *Essays* under this belief. They have, for the most part, been drawn from my own impressions and experience, and are a record of my varied fancies, whims and moods.

## PREFACE

I cannot describe them in a better way than by quoting from Montaigne's *Preface*, "It is myself that I am painting..... I am myself the subject of my Book. "

The four *Essays* towards the end, which read like short stories, and which take up for their subjects a few of the prominent social evils, will, however, need an apology. They have been included in this book of personal essays because they are vivid pictures of social life as I have seen myself. It is my belief that the strength necessary for rebelling against the tyranny of social custom comes, not from abstract philosophical discussions, but from such pictures of social life as enable the mental eye to directly visualize the magnitude of the mischief. Again, a touch of irony has been added to make them more *pointed*. Their inclusion will, it is hoped, seem not unjustifiable on these grounds.

Another batch of *Essays* which will, perhaps, need an apology is where I have been too impatient to anticipate my own end. The

Reader will find some inconsistency between the conclusion of my essay on *Death* where I have been sceptical about this most certain event, and those on *Insomnia*, *An Understamped Letter*, *Newspaper Column* where I have almost taken it for granted as being distinctly within sight. My only defence is my prolonged illness which, inspite of my native cheerfulness and youthful outlook on life, has often brought on such fits of melancholy and despair. The redeeming feature, however, will seem to be that such fits have been as passing clouds, and no pessimistic theories have been propounded under their influence. Even when swayed by them, I have tried to force a smile wherever possible. It is my hope, therefore, that the Reader will not be disturbed or annoyed over these passing phases of a subnormal mind.

*Of a Newspaper Column* is a slightly puzzling essay unless the Reader understands that the *column* referred to is the *Wanted* column. I have thrown out a sufficient number of hints in the *Essay* itself, and have used

italics where the word 'wanted' has occurred; but I was told by my friends who read it in MS, that I should give the clue, at least in the *Preface*, if not in the *title*. I said, "All right."

The last essay: *Patience on a Monument*, is not originally intended to be critical. It is an attempt to show that originality in ideas or opinions should never be suppressed at any cost. What really matters is the capacity to think, to form judgments *for ourselves*; not merely to reproduce what others have thought or judged *for themselves*.

I must say a few words about the style of these essays. English, though a bread-winner, is not my mother tongue; and my knowledge of it has mostly come from books, seldom from an intimate personal contact with Englishmen. I am fully aware of the limitations of my achievement, therefore; and will never regard it as a deprecation or insult to be called an *Indian writer of English*. I know that my

powers of expression must, naturally, be defective, and my handling of the English idiom and vocabulary far from being satisfactory. I only wish to say here that handicapped as I am, I have made sincere efforts to overcome these defects by choosing a few favourite books, and reading them over and over again, to make their beauties *mine*. In the absence of the Englishman's living contact, I have been content with this intimacy with the dead. Prominent among these favourites are *Religio Medici*, *the Citizen of the World*, *Essays of Elia* and *Virginius Puerisque*. They will stand securities for me. They will assure the Reader that my style, though full of defects, is not wholly devoid of interest, because my models are of the very best.

I shall conclude with a most sincere acknowledgment of my indebtedness to Prof. Chas. A. Dobson for allowing me to dedicate these *Essays* to him, and also for the loan (which I do not propose to return) of his photograph for inclusion in this volume: to M. S. Joshi of

## PREFACE

II Year Arts, Holkar College, for illustrating four of these *Essays*; to the Directors ( and in particular Prof. W. G. Urdhwareshe M. A. M. R. A. S., and Mr. V. L. Namjoshi ) of the Central Co-operative Printing and Publishing Society Limited for taking up the work of printing and publication; and, lastly, to my friend S. K. Nagdule, and my pupils Deshpande and L. O. Joshi, but for whose help in the correction of proofs etc. an *errata* would have been absolutely necessary.

HOLKAR COLLEGE, }  
27th oct. 1934. }

D. M. B.



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## CERTIFICATES AND TESTIMONIALS.

Of the many acts of gratuitous benevolence for which our profession is considered noble, there is, perhaps, none, which embarrasses the benefactor, and, at the same time, gratifies the blest one, to a greater degree than the giving of a testimonial. I do not know what others feel on the matter; for my own part, I have always felt myself unequal to the task, and have in vain hoped that every testimonial that I wrote would be my last one. Their number, however, has unknowingly gone up like the score of a batsman who is well-set; and I have already scored my century of this season, to my great wonder and amazement. It is not a small matter, ( is it ? ) to set afloat this currency of merit to fetch its dubious price in the world's market. The responsibility involved staggers me, and I say to myself, " This will not do, this thoughtless make-shift every time. There must be some laws governing the produce of this precious commodity; and I must

make an effort to discover them, if I am to be a successful practitioner of the art." Thus resolved, I make an effort with the most *bona fide* intentions.

The first, and the most obvious distinction which strikes me is that between a certificate and a testimonial; and we must make up our minds whether the recipient of our benefactions stands in need of the one or the other. For, the certificate is fact, the testimonial, fiction. The certificate is history, the testimonial, poetry. The one calls for our powers of imagination and inventive genius; the other, those of observation, systematization and faithful presentation. The one requires us to be idealistic thinkers; the other pins us down to the hard realism of facts.

Having thus made up our minds whether we would be historians or poets, we will proceed, as the need dictates, along certain well-marked lines. When a student comes to us for a certificate, all that we shall do is to state, that he passed a particular examination in a particular division; and add, whether he belonged to the

first eleven, or took part in social activities and things of the kind. We shall imagine ourselves in the position of a doctor writing the life-history of our patient in a neat, un-equivocal language. Thus, when Wordsworth says, "I have measured it from side to side, 'tis two feet long and three feet wide," he is in the certifying mood. When Cæsar says, "Yon Cassius has a lean and a hungry look; he thinks too much; he loves no plays, he hears no music," etc. it is all a genuine certificate, only wanting in, one phrase, which my business-like Principal used about me fifteen years ago: "*As far as is known to me!*" Cæsar should have added this. Every writer of a genuine certificate should use it. That is, the "safety first" method, and belongs legitimately to the historians, scientists, medical practitioners, Census-reporters and writers of good certificates.

But when it comes to giving a testimonial, the real difficulty comes in; and it will persist, we may be sure, every time we attempt to write one, unless we study the problem in a scientific, methodical way. The successful practitioner of

this art must, first of all, imagine that when any one comes to him for a testimonial, it is not Mr. so and so—Mahajan, or Gupta or Shrivastava or any one in particular. He is only a symbol, a model upon which he has to lavish all his art and all his craft. Just as the beloved of the poet is not one lady in particular, but like Shakespeare's Rosalind,

“ Of many parts, of many faces, eyes and hearts, ”

so is his student, not an individual in particular, but an ideal combining the graces and virtues of all the great and good students of antiquity—Milton, Macaulay, Burton, Coleridge, Pater, all rolled into one. He must be credited, in every case, with an *exceptional ability*; so that, as far as the testimonials go, the exception becomes the rule. Again, he must be described, in every case, as being distinctly above the average; so that, one must wonder, where really the average man resides, whether he is a burrowing creature living underground like rats, or under water like fish, afraid of coming into the open air for fear of these

supermen, the recipients of our testimonials, who are all distinctly above the average. And then, he must be shown to have an ideal moral character. In this respect, the golden rule is, "Never suspect human nature." All evil must be purged away, and the image of the student must be conceived as coming with a halo of the dazzling radiance of virtue.

If we are prepared to have this preliminary training, then we are on the high-road to success; and all that is needed, further, is to marshal a few phrases from literature to polish the rough exterior of our diamond. Thus, if our student has worked his way through great hardships, and has kept his head steady under all circumstances, we must at once testify, "Mr....is a man that fortune's buffets and rewards has taken with equal thanks." If our student is always very neatly dressed, cultured and elegant, we will at once put down, "The glass of fashion." If he is precociously intelligent, shall we not say, "His Minerva is born in panoply"? and so on, till we have a suitable phrase for every virtue under

the moon. And we may do the same with greater ease, to be sure, if, perchance, a girl-student comes for the testimonial, and say, among other things, of course, if she does not mind it, "The observed of all observers." !

Those persons, whose testimonials it is worth having, are unfortunately always so busy that it is not possible for them to take so much trouble to make an elaborate study of this art; and besides, if ever they find time, their utilitarian conscience will often give them a sharp sting as it is, after all, a mere gratuitous performance. We contentedly walk ten miles for a penny, but are not willing to go ten yards for nothing. For such a race of worldly-wisemen, the best guide would be a 'Dictionary of Virtues.' I have come across several dictionaries. Our poor language has been split up into such bits that there seems to be no end to this 'hair-splitting.' Dictionary of sport, of gardening, of domestic pets, of geographical terms, of medical terms, of the science of cooking, ( which, by the way, is according to me, more of an art );

how many dictionaries have we seen? But is there no budding author, or patient compiler to give us a 'Dictionary of Virtues?' Is the great distinction between vice and virtue no more?

Another good suggestion would be, for these busy ones, to have printed forms with spaces left for filling in the name of the supplicating candidate, as in school or college leaving certificates. I don't suppose they will have to fill in many entries, for all candidates are alike in their virtues, as "all are beauties in the dark." They differ only in their names, just as they do in their ages or heights; not in our sympathy for them, nor, above all, in their moral character. These small differences do not matter in the least to the great Giver of Testimonials. He has already stationed himself on such a lofty pinnacle of generous disposition that these microscopic differences between individual attainments appear contemptible to him; and he sees them all floating on the surface of humanity with equally dazzling colours, and does not care whether one is a mere schooner, and another a gigantic P. and O. liner.

Another way out of the difficulty, would, perhaps, be, to direct the candidate to a professional writer 'of such stuff, and get the draft made for merely attaching the signature. Such a class of professionals is yet to come into being, and let us hope, not in the very distant future. If in the days of Queen Bess poets used to write sonnets for payment, why should masters and doctors of literature not practise this useful art, in an age that finds no employment for them? I can well imagine candidates flocking in large numbers to such a professional, each with a piece of paper containing an inventory of his virtues, and the specialist, like a tailor, making a testimonial to '*suit*' each one at, let us say, so many pennies per virtue, ( charging extra for polished literary phrases, similes, and metaphors and things of the kind ). It is all perfectly simple. If a tailor can make a man out of you, why may not this qualified specialist make a superman out of the same stuff?



The Testimonial Specialist manufacturing supermen.

## BACHELORS AND MARRIED MEN.

A friend once asked me how to distinguish, at first sight, married men from bachelors. I was then reading a play by Shakespeare, and told my friend that if he had put the same question to Shakespeare, he should have replied that married men could easily be marked out by the horns on their heads. The twentieth century married man has, however, managed to get rid of this sixteenth century appendage. And so I really do not know how to answer the question. I do not believe in all that nonsense that is talked about a bachelor's strong and healthy looks; for I am considering here, not what ought to be, but what actually is. That Bachelors ought to be strong, does not mean that they are strong, any more than that a code of laws means a well-governed country. I also determine to do many things because I feel I ought to do them. But I find that these very things refuse to have anything to do with me. It is, indeed, a lamentable

fact that things are what they are, in spite of what they should have been. Who, for instance, would not like the roads to be always sloping, the season to be always Spring, work to be always play, gods to be always just, bachelors to be always strong? But if such wishes were horses, even beggars would ride. Alas, and alas! We must live in this imperfect world and not in Utopias; we must face the fact that men are mortal, and that bachelors are not necessarily stronger and healthier than married men.

I had, for a long time, put off this question; but at last I thought, I might hazard a solution, if not for anything else, at least for enabling others to distinguish me from my next-door neighbour who happens to be a bachelor. That we lived in two separate houses, and that I had a wife to support while he had none, was not enough; for when we both were walking together, some people actually took for granted that I was the bachelor and my companion the married one. I was scandalized. "Have I taken all this trouble," I said to myself, "to be

thus mistaken for a bachelor?" And I thought, it was my duty, to the best of my ability, to devise means to remove any such misunderstanding that might result in the future. For a time I thought, we might, like the people of the West, make it a point to go out with our wives. But I soon realized that it was highly inconvenient, like always taking a side-car to one's motor-bike.

It is very difficult to distinguish married men from bachelors, at first sight. But a study of the psychology of any individual gives us a fairly correct estimate. I wish to suggest that there is a vast difference of temperament between the two. The bachelor, in spite of all his associations, has a great emotional void in his heart which he tries to fill somehow, by directing the course of his affections to something which may serve as a substitute—I mean some hobby peculiar to himself. I have quite a large number of such "Bachelor-friends" who corroborate this view. One of them is busy making a huge collection of old coins. Another is carefully

preserving defaced stamps: A third is after accumulating a vast treasure of ten thousand various specimens of labels on safety-matches. Others have hobbies of their own. No one lives without them, for the emotional void must be supplied in some form or other. Man is fond of company; and he must have it either in the form of a living person or in the form of a living interest. I cannot imagine a bachelor who is absolutely colourless. That would make life impossible. He must take to something; at least like my friend of Agra, to playing cards.

This modern age of bustle and sensation has fostered a large number of bachelors. It has become possible for them to fill the gap in their lives by means of a variety of substitutes. There are diversions of all sorts on hand; and they can keep their minds engaged from morning till midnight. And yet there is a desolate look about a bachelor. He appears like a desperate creature trying to catch at everything that comes in his way. He tries to take interest in every thing. There is an all-sided confusion about him,

because he does not know where to settle down. He is like a man who has not found his feet. Life is a constant change for him, 'a shifting of shadows' which he cannot lay hold on. His life's ship has no anchor to cast any where and so it goes wherever the breeze takes it. I think, with bachelors money is time, and not time money. They purchase their time with their money. They pay for their 'life-interest' at every stage. They must pay at the theatre if their emotions have to be roused. They must pay for their friend's dinner if they want company. They purchase life with their money. And so a poor bachelor is, indeed, a very miserable creature. He has to lead a life of solitary confinement in which he feels that his world is limited only to one person, and that person is 'the first-person singular.'

On the other hand, a married man has a look of indifference, of detachment in all that he does. He is conscious of his deep-rooted interest at home, and does not create ties outside, which are of a very intimate nature. He does not talk of

"love" nor of "love-letters," nor does he indulge in all that silly nonsense that is shielded under the name of friendship. No Damon and Pythias, no Achilles and Patroclus, by your leave; but Mr. Smith and Mr. Brookes among married men. They have no sentiments to waste on more unworthy objects than their own wife and children at home. They look upon hobbies with an indulgence. They know that hobbies are shallow, feelingless, and dull; and must be tolerated for the sake of variety in life. Otherwise love, itself, has its own satiety and yearns for a change. All husbands are not blessed with Cleopatras whom age cannot wither. And so when the married man becomes middle-aged, he acquires some of the bachelor's qualities; his love of hobbies, of company, of gossip, on the whole, of sensation rather than feeling in life. But, even here, we can distinguish between bachelors and married men by applying a simple test. Does the middle-aged man appear younger ( in spirits ) than his years ? Most probably, he is a married man: Does he appear older, than his years ? Most probably, he

is a bachelor ! And the reason is obvious. By this time, the bachelor has lost most of his keenness for sensation, whereas the married one has only started taking interest in it. The bachelor now feels that gossip is monotonous, company is tedious; he becomes impatient, desolate, moody. The married one, on the other hand, is going strong. His anchor is still cast. But the sea has become deeper, and the anchor has lost its firm hold; so his life's ship enjoys these pleasant oscillations without apprehending any danger of being carried away by the breeze.

It is, probably, in his old age that the bachelor realizes the folly of his having remained single all his life. An old bachelor feels hopelessly alone. The pleasures of sensation in life on which he used to depend in his earlier days, have now been denied him. He cannot divert his mind to those pleasures and forget himself. Sir Harry Poland, when he reached the age of ninety-seven said, that he could reach that age because he was unmarried; otherwise he should have died long ago, on which the Times remarked, that

though a long life may have its own fascination, there is also such a thing as dying in a good cause. Indeed, marriage is a good cause to die in. We do not know whether the bachelor or the married man lives longer. But is a long life our ideal? Or, is it living it well? To be left alone in life, in an emotional sense, is death itself. Physical decay is nothing to it. It is better to curtail twenty years of a long life, if that ensures living it well.

The married one, in his old age, realizes all the more the importance of the wise step he took in getting married. If the couple was foolhardy in love when young, it has become perfectly sober now. The gentleman is flattered to think that while all other women hate him, his wife is the only one who tolerates him. His hearth is kept burning, and he has a ready chair to offer to a worthy stranger. He is amused with himself when little freaks of devilry tempt him even at such an age. The old man of seventy, it is well said, 'who kisses his wife, does so with a sense of humour.' He knows that from that celestial garden where roses and lilies used

to grow, he can now have only a few wrinkled stems. But he is satisfied with what he gets. He has his best friend in life. Both have known each other's weaknesses and have forgiven them long since. There are no jealous moments, for no old man suspects his wife and, perhaps, *vice versa* no old lady suspects her husband. It is an age too advanced to profit by a divorce. Thus all dangers from marriage having been eliminated, life becomes a peaceful and contented journey towards the end.

As I conclude these lines, the inner voice tells me that I have been extremely partial to married men. I do not know, but, perhaps, it may be, that every man is partial. But I feel, I am erring on the safer side, as there is an overwhelming majority of married men in this world; and if, at all, the bachelors do protest, their voices will be drowned in the jubilant cries of the majority.

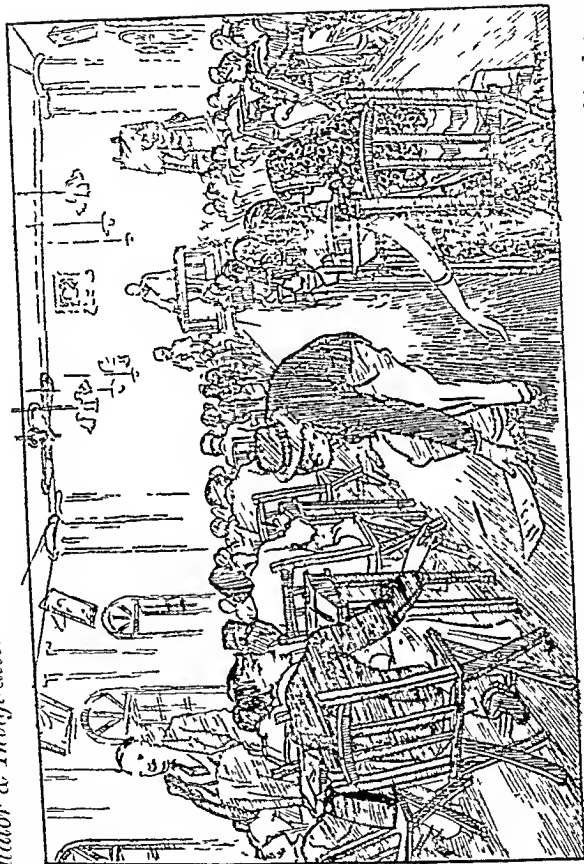
## INVIGILATOR AND INVIGILATION:

The candidate who steps into the examination hall is curious to know who is the invigilator in charge. Not that he is particularly interested in the man; but that he knows he has to hand over his answer-book to him. And, perhaps, he is not a little jealous of him too; for while he is worrying his brain over all types of crooked questions, the invigilator in charge is seen placidly moving about, unaffected by the nature of the question paper; and while he is able to read anxiety, diffidence, despair or hope in the faces of his other fellows in the hall, the invigilator betrays no such feeling, except, perhaps, the one of being well-fed. And then he wishes and prays that he was the invigilator, instead of the candidate.

I also thought so when I was a boy; but I have corrected my estimate long since. I do not like to be the invigilator. I would much rather

be the candidate. In fact, the very idea of invigilation has become hateful to me. For it presupposes dishonesty, crookedness and every other evil under the moon, to be present in the candidate. It starts with the assumption that no boy is actively virtuous. It builds on the same foundation as the Police Department, suspecting and trying to detect evil and nothing but evil, in human nature. It has a degraded notion about young men, and works out its elaborate system on the basis of this erroneous belief. The invigilator, therefore, inspires no love, no respect, no fellow-feeling, not even ordinary courtesy, but only hatred and fear.

And the pity of it is that no student is detected using unfair means. The invigilator goes up and down, all his life, and yet he hardly discovers a single case in which he has any opportunity to exercise his special powers of detection. He is like a police officer who has caught no thief; a judge who has not given a single decision; a pleader who has not argued even once; a wily Atropos who has not cut

*Investigator & Investigation*

“And sometimes when one drops his or her pen or pencil, this venerable detective of evil and fraud must promptly bend low and pick it up.”

" with abhorred shears " a single youth's career ! His super-abundant energy, has therefore to be directed into other channels, such as sending for drinking water for the candidates, supplying a fresh answer-book or a piece of blotting paper, telling what time of the day it is, and so on. And sometimes when one drops his or her pen or pencil, this venerable detective of evil and fraud must promptly bend low and pick it up and go without being thanked in return, for the candidates know very well that no talk is allowed in the examination hall. And so they cannot say, " Thank you, sir ". He, however, consoles himself, pitying all the while their inability to express their sense of gratitude, and tracing the very word ' Thanks ' as far as their throats, if no farther.

Let us venture for, a moment, to draw a picture of the examination hall in the absence of an invigilator; in other words, let us see how far the cause of education will suffer if there were no invigilators, and the boys answered their papers with open books on their desks. I do

not foresee a deluge, to be frank; just as I do not apprehend one, if there were no examinations at all. Are you afraid, the boy will reproduce the language of the book? Ask him to write in his own words, and mark him down if he does otherwise. Are you afraid the boy will not memorize at home and depend upon the books for dates in history, or formulæ in chemistry? Let him have the book and see if he does not omit half the number of questions in trying to collect from the books material for the other half. Do you want to test his knowledge, or his expression, or his honesty? In the name of fairness, let us know exactly what your examination wants. You may be as exacting as you like, the facts are plainly these. No one can use a book to his advantage in the examination hall, who has not read it at home; no one can find the answer to a question in the hall itself, who has not found it already in some form or other at home. If at all anything can be said against such a system, it is that a boy's memory is not properly tested if he is allowed the use of books. But it may be retorted: The Lawyer, the Doctor, the Engineer,

the Teacher,—every responsible man depends upon books and not memory, if he wants to be exact. Memory can never make a man exact; only the written word can claim to do so. If, then, life does not demand feats of memory, why should an examiner do so ?

Thus, on principle, I do not like invigilation; and so I feel, all the more, the boredom of it. I cannot, for the life of me, decide how to spend or waste the *three hours* in the best possible manner. I consider it a lesser evil to invigilate in the mornings, and in a big room; for walking from one end to the other in such a room makes a very good morning walk of eight to nine miles, and gives you a very good appetite at the right time. The monotony of this walk becomes less tedious if, off and on, a boy interrupts you with his demand for blotting paper or a fresh answer book. Besides, your walk always gives you opportunity of studying the effect of the question paper upon the various candidates, and how they betray their results in their looks; so that a forecast of who would pass, and who would fail,

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and the subsequent verification of the same, gives you another opening when you are hard up. These are, however, mighty tame consolations. The broad fact remains that the monotony of invigilation is so intolerable as to amount to a regular punishment; and I would not be surprised if, one of these days, this punishment is included among others in the Penal Code.

## DEATH.

Our professor at Allahabad had a terrible dislike for all knowledge obtained at second hand. I once happened to remark that the plays of Shakespeare are difficult to understand; upon which he at once inquired whether I had gone through all of them. And on being told that I had not, he scolded me for having made an unwarranted statement from second-hand information. Since then, I have taken such a fright that I am not willing to swear that there exists a city like London, because I have not seen it myself!

I am going to say the same thing, more or less, in regard to death. It is a subject about which I know nothing definitely, except, that nobody knows anything definite about it. It is a subject on which first-hand information is impossible, for, in the words of Hamlet, it is an "undiscovered country from whose bourn no

traveller returns " to tell us what it is like; nor do we expect to return to profit by our own experience of that "undiscovered country". Our knowledge in this respect, therefore, is a vast conjecture from the effects of death on others.

It is said that a child knows nothing about death; that in its blissful existence death has no room. I have no recollections of my own childhood to warrant a first-hand statement; though I remember, people used to die in those days also. But persons with better brains, and among others Steele, tell us their own experiences. Steele tells us in his beautiful way, how he was ignorant of the idea of death and the changes wrought by death, until his weeping mother told him what they meant. "The first sense of sorrow," he writes, "I ever knew was upon the death of my father, at which time I was not quite five years of age; but was rather amazed at what all the house meant, than possessed with a real understanding why nobody was willing to play with me. I remember I went into the room where his body lay, and my mother sat weeping

alone by it. I had my battledore in my hand, and fell a-beating the coffin, and calling Papa; for I know not how, I had some slight idea that he was locked up there. My mother caught me in her arms, and, transported beyond all patience of the silent grief she was before in, she almost smothered me in her embraces; and told me, in a flood of tears, Papa could not hear me, and would play with me no more, for they were going to put him under ground, whence he could never come to us again. "

My own impression is that a child is not wholly ignorant of all this. He knows that death is something which men do not like, something which is never mentioned in the house. I have observed this in the case of a child whom I know very intimately because he happens to be my youngest brother. My father was very fond of him, and he would daily sleep with him in the same bed and fondle him in a number of ways. But when my father was on his death-bed, the little child refused to go near him, though he was often called for; and after my father's death,

my brother has not once mentioned his name, as though he knew exactly what had happened. Only the other day I asked him where father was. "He is dead," said the child. I asked him what he meant, and he said he did not know.

And with grown-up people, the case is not very different. They know that death causes separation without the possibility of ever bringing back the lost one. They know, the various circumstances that precede death—such as drowning, consumption, or poisoning. And many of them know how to burn or bury a dead body. But there is probably no other event in the world's history (except birth) which has been more often repeated and less understood. I was on the point of despairing, when a spiritualist came with big explanations of the phenomenon, and showed me something which he called a "planchette." For a time there was quite a sensation. I thought the problem was on the verge of solution. But alas; I soon found that it was again a vast conjecture and no convincing proof. I have known the said spiritualist for as many years,

almost, as I have known myself. I have seen his demonstrations, and heard his lectures. He has paid repeated visits to the United Provinces and even stayed in Allahabad for a long time. But my doubts have always been stronger than his convictions.

I am, therefore, obliged to look back into my own experience once more. I have not seen many deaths. I have seen only two. On the seventeenth of March, I saw my father breathe his last. I could mark him very well, for his head was placed in my lap when he was dying. I do not wish to dwell upon the physical symptoms. We all know how one by one the limbs stiffen, and how breathing becomes quick, and so on. I want to dwell upon the psychology of the dying man; and I wish to suggest that this can be read in his eyes. They are full of longing, disappointment, terror, confusion, helplessness, pity and intense sense of pain. I believe, the dying man puts forth his utmost in the struggle with death. He is conscious of his end, yet does not want to go. He has interests in this world which

entangle his soul and make his passage difficult. He forgets his intense pain when he comes to think about his leave-taking; and yet, he cannot ignore the pain, for it is intense. I have no faith in a painless death, unless, when we artificially produce insensibility and put an end to life. Death has been very often compared to sleep, but my contention is that in gradually falling asleep we do not experience pain; we imperceptibly become unconscious of everything. I would rather compare it with the process of chloroforming, when we have to struggle to be unconscious.

But the fact remains that apart from this intense pain, whether physical or mental, the most remarkable thing in a dying man is the expression in his eyes. He clings, as it were, to the people around him by means of his eyes; he would fain do it with his hands, but they have already lost their power. He wishes to move his limbs but cannot control them. His eyes only obey him, and they depict all that he wants to say and do. I have not seen a greater wonder

than the eyes of a dying man. The whole life of the man comes behind them. They are full of volumes of thought. There is a pathos in them that cannot be described. The man is taking his leave for ever. He has seen what men do with dead bodies. He knows that for all practical purposes death is complete destruction. He has heard it repeated that the Soul is immortal. Perhaps it is immortal. But for the moment he is occupied with his body. It is that which is in danger of being completely destroyed. He does not know where the soul goes. It may go to Heaven or to Hell. Ignorance is bliss in that case. But he knows positively where the body will go. And this is a terrible idea. When he was healthy he used to see other people buried or burned after they were dead. But then he was a philosopher, and used to say that the body of the dead man never feels the heat of the flames or the coldness of the earth. Now the time has come; but he cannot beguile his doubts by means of his philosophy. All this and much more can be read in the eyes of a dying man. I repeat, they are the most wonderful thing I

have ever seen. It has been an experience in my life with which I have nothing to compare. I regard it as a great opportunity in life to see a dying man, because it gives rise to endless speculation.

Such an opportunity came once more on the first of July, when I got up early in the morning and went to the Central Jail to see a hanging scene. The unfortunate victim of the Law was a young man of thirty, very stout and well-built. I am sure, he would have lived to a grand old age if he had escaped. And the irony of the whole affair was that his name was Amar Singh, signifying immortality. I was struck by the vanity of his parents at the time of naming him, and I thought we all should take a lesson; for we are not always sure whether our own children will successfully escape the rope. At about a quarter to six, Amar Singh mounted the platform. His hands and legs were tied and he was made to stand there with the cord round his neck. I then saw the same wonderful expression in his eyes. A host of emotions struggled

to express itself there. "May you never meet the same fate", he said to the persons assembled to witness the grim sport. And they were his last words. At six, a small handle was turned, and the poor victim was instantly suspended by the neck. For one full hour his dead body was kept so.

I do not like this manner of inflicting capital punishment. And, more particularly, because it shows a cowardly triumph of Justice over the helpless individual. The man is not allowed to struggle for life, to put forth the best in him against death; he dies like a poor lamb or a cow in the shambles. I do not, for a moment, call in question the propriety of capital punishment. I hope, I should not speak against it, even if I were deservedly a victim of it. All that I mean is that the man should be allowed to struggle for life. You may make him fight against overwhelming odds. Let him fight with an angry lioness or half a dozen wolves, unarmed and unaided. Let him jump down from the Muir College tower, or go without food for two months. If he survives

the ordeal, well then, he deserves to live for his bravery. He may have been the greatest of culprits; but he is, also, the bravest of men.

We all know that death creates a scene of sorrow around it. The relatives and friends mourn loudly; the well-wishers begin to philosophize. I have seen, however, that our sorrow is keener before the death has occurred; after that, we reconcile ourselves to the event. Our sorrow is intense before death; it is diffused and weak after that. We know that all is over and we become helpless. But while there is a painful struggle between hope and despair, the anxious moments are most painful. Once Despair has triumphed over Hope, our prudence altogether gets the better of our emotions.

I experienced this on the third of January when I went to the Hospital to pay a visit to a consumptive patient who had been suffering for over eight months. She was an exceedingly good-natured lady, not very distantly related to us. We used to pay frequent visits to the hospital

while she was there; but we knew already that the case was a hopeless one. But on the third of January, the Doctor came to me and said, "Look here, you are going away to-day and will return after a month. But there is only a week of life left for her." I was extremely moved to hear it. The sight of the patient brought a flood of tears to my eyes. I had not wept for years; but I wept on that occasion. The lady died soon after, and I received the news by post. But then I did not weep. The worst had come, and it could not have been worse.

I wish to conclude this article with an idea which is, perhaps, peculiar to me. When I begin to think about my own death at some time in the future, I somehow never believe, entirely, that I am going to die. It seems such a distant event, and so little connected with my daily life, my college work and tennis, that I altogether drive away the idea which is so superfluous and so unconvincing. I somehow flatter myself that I am an exception to this inevitable rule; and that is what makes life liveable and pleasant to me.

## THE COLLEGE AUTOMOBILES FAMILY.

As our college was, for a long time, unknown to these petrol-driven beings, it is a matter of great pride and satisfaction that about a dozen of them now regularly visit the college. I consider it a distinct sign of improvement, and a proof of the much-talked-of expansion which the college has seen during recent years. In my time, the college was in its "early nineteenth century" civilization, in this respect, with horse-drawn vehicles; and our memories of that time are of horses and coaches. As for example, when Mr. W. 's horse was unwell, he could not attend a meeting in town, and had to excuse himself for twenty minutes on the 'phone (where, by the way, brevity is most urged), before the speaker at the other end of the wire could understand what the matter really was. And, again, I remember how Mr. K. 's horse behaved exactly like Mr. Pickwick 's, and when,

at last, he proceeded, no doubt, for chivalrous considerations, the lights had already been switched off in the cinema theatre.

But such ' four-footed ' memories soon gave place to " four-wheeled " ones. The first sensation of this type that we experienced, when this century was still in its teens, was the sudden, and almost inexplicable noise that shook both the teacher and the taught, and for a time suspended the lecturing work in the college. The Great War had then been just concluded; and our fears, though lulled, were yet not so mitigated as to assure us that it could not be a stray German aeroplane, sent out by that ambitious nation to destroy the rich British possessions in the Far East. I do not believe it but some people say that one boy actually fainted on that occasion. It turned out to be the imperious announcement of the first four-wheeled petrol-driven visitor to our college. She was, in all probability, the eldest daughter of Mr. Henry Ford; and like Œdipus at Colonus, had come to our college for finally laying down her old bones.

Manifold are the memories which this veteran has left behind. Some will remember how she had a very bad digestion, and could take in only homeopathic doses of petrol administered in small phials, instead of the usual canisters. Minims and scruples were her petrol measures, not gallons. At a time, she never covered more than a few yards. Others will describe how the wheels had spokes of cracked wood, kept together by cords wound round, as though each one of them was an electro-magnet without the current. Others, still, may have the echoes of her terrible noise ringing in their ears. However varied may be these memories, there can be but few who do not remember to have pushed her along the road. The most remarkable thing about this car was that it seemed to advocate a new principle. It seemed to proclaim, that among the many reasons why pedestrians walk the roads, one of the most indisputable ones is that they do so in order that they should always be at hand to push such cars as refuse to move with the solitary assistance of petrol. This assertion of the four-wheeler's

right over the biped, redounds greatly to the credit of this veteran of our College. The reason why it is not extensively enforced on our roads is that the owners of cars are ignorant of their rights and privileges; or, perhaps, because they labour under the mis-apprehension that this novel method of propelling an automobile, is, by a patent, the sole monopoly of this veteran. It is a pity how mis-apprehensions often lead to tribulations and waste. Those who believe this method to be patented, have unnecessarily to employ a pair of bullocks, and all that sort of thing to achieve the same end. If only the owners of cars knew how unselfishly this veteran dedicated her eminent discovery to the general good, who would think of the appalling waste of four legs, when he can serve his turn with but two ?

Like the fabled Phoenix, there grew out of the ashes of this remarkable car, another, which carried on the tradition of her illustrious ancestor in many respects, but differed from her to the same extent to which a man of sixty-nine differs from a man of ninety-six ! This " Ford " gave

*The College Automobiles Family*

"This assertion of the four-wheeler's right over the biped, redounds greatly to the credit of this veteran of our College."

you a peculiar sensation if you ever drove in it. You believed that she was going in all possible directions at the same time; that the different parts, including the wheels, were trying to fly off on all sides, but were somehow held together by a powerful nucleus. Her boisterous sound had procured her the title of "The Aeroplane." Her seating accommodation was, however, much more than this otherwise appropriate title signified. I have seen her loaded with four professors, two students, and the driver! She was "the most borrowed" of all cars. Some professors claimed her as almost their own property; others with excusable forwardness took advantage of the leniency of the owner. Like all modern establishments she had "no vacancy." I am sure, none will miss her so much as some of the professors.

There is another competitor who hopes to equal, if not excel, the glorious achievement of these epic personalities. I should have told you her name, if only I could believe what is written on the radiator. I would not advise any one to

drive in it to the Railway Station ! Even if the train has not yet arrived, and to the Station is but a few yards' distance from your house, I would not ask you to risk it. You may take it to the college, if you like; that is altogether a different thing. The difference between a college and a railway train is like the difference between immovable and movable property. The college can wait; the train cannot. So it does not matter if you use it for purposes of your higher education, if not for your travel. If you are late and have to pay a fine, it is just as though the car has consumed more petrol. Such a car enables you to swell your pocket allowance considerably, so that you can pay all such fines, have afternoon tea in the College Refreshment Rooms, indulge in small bettings on the tennis court, play bridge with stakes and attend cinema theatres twice a week ! Petrol covers all this. Petrol is your convincing excuse for every spend-thrift habit, and you need not invent anything better.

I should have liked to mention the 'make' of another veteran still; but I am afraid, you will

unnecessarily start exaggerating her defects. To an impartial observer, she is a car which only one man can drive ( and that man is not the owner himself ) like the famous horse of Alexander the Great; and she obeys what is known to science as the Periodic Law; for she is to be seen on the road only on Fridays between certain specified hours. Only once I saw her being used on a day that was not a Friday. And lo ! before she had covered a mile, four men armed with swords and clad in silk marched out of her into the open street like warriors from the Dragon's teeth ! For a long time, it remained a mystery. Some even thought of it as a miracle; till at last, the inquisitive ones, " murdering to dissect," found these four to be no less than four " Durbarees " stranded on their way to the " Durbar ! "

There are many others who are still very young and have yet to make history; I do not propose to detain the reader over them. A new or young member of this family does not evoke much interest in our College. People say,

"The man has money, and so he has bought her." There is nothing remarkable about a brand-new car, except, perhaps, the fact that she becomes an index of the financial condition of the owner. The grand Buick cars in which the son of a multi-millionaire comes to the college, do not afford the slightest exercise to the critical faculty or the curiosity of the college public. An old second-hand car, on the other hand, does both. "Who is the owner?" "What has he paid for her?" "How many miles has she done?" "What is her petrol consumption?" These, and a hundred other queries are raised, and the whole atmosphere is surcharged with interesting gossip!

The latest sensation of this type was the addition, to this big family, of a baby who was found one fine morning playing under the 'neem' tree on the eastern side of the college building. Some persons gathered round her, no doubt with the best of intentions, but she rushed upon them with such a wild force, that all ran away, and one actually thought he was run over. Since

then, every one is afraid of her, and admires at a distance while she toddles along the road. At any rate, the Baby is right welcome: for in course of time she is bound to develop into something bigger, more consistent, more dependable.

Another baby would have come, too, if the novel scheme of four professors jointly owning a car had succeeded. The scheme prospered very well so long as three were willing; but as soon as the fourth one was in sight, defects of the scheme presented themselves in all sorts of horrible shapes. One of the partners had just fifty rupees less which it was impossible for him to procure ! Another was now unwilling to own this "Diaupadi" type of creature ! The third one said he could never learn how to drive, and would not think of attempting to learn in the interests of public safety; and the fourth, who had originated the scheme, was buried under the weight of his own idea; and the following epitaph could be read on the grave of his Motor-ing Ambition: "The man had good ideas; but somehow, others found them to be impracticable".

I cannot close this chapter without referring to one that travels like the shadow of these bigger ones—I mean the motor bicycle with a side-car ! She has often emulated these elders by accommodating as many as four adults,—two in the side-car, one in the driver's seat and one on the luggage carrier ! She is a cycle, if you please; but some actually call it a car. The owner, at any rate, calls her his " Car ", and indulges in a vanity peculiar to himself. He has kept a diary of his motoring activities, and has recorded the names of all those who have occupied the side-car seat. His list already has more than two hundred and thirty names—a remarkable gathering to be sure, including eminent scholars, renowned musicians, great sportsmen, full-blooded young men and sweet young women,—all very interesting, full of striking recollections. I am sure two of these names will go down to posterity, and be remembered for a couple of centuries, if not for ever. I am not sure whether his side-car is ever going to lodge an immortal—I mean one, who is not of an age, but for all time. I am

not, however, much concerned about such an one at the present time. I would rather mention three others, one fine young gentleman, and two sweet young girls, who are now no more, and never can repeat their kindness by condescending to occupy the humble seat ! Their names on the list are perpetual reminders of three of the most lamentable tragedies within living memory: B. L. S. with his hearty laugh!—sweet-voiced A. R.; and thoroughly feminine S. K.—where are these occupants of the side-car now ? Alas ! it has always been so with Memory. There is not a joy that she can give like that she takes away. Why keep such diaries and records then ? Let us burn them. It is no use thus assisting Memory. Where's the glory of those two hundred and thirty before the gloom of these three ?

## THE LATE MR. DOMBEY'S DIARY.

The easiest way to humour the late Mr. Dombey was to speak well of his Diary, which he kept with admirable regularity, and from which he used to read out to us lengthy extracts from time to time. The practice was, in itself, above reproach; only the claims of the writer were open to dispute. For when asked why he was so particular in writing it, he would reply, combining good humour with vanity, that although he was too modest to attempt an autobiography, he was yet not too humble to be beneath the consideration of a biographer; and was making it easier for such an one. "Besides," he would add in the same strain, "who knows, one of these days it will become history, like the diary of Pepys" !

Either this philanthropic motive of obliging his future biographer or Editor, in the first place, and the whole world in the next, prevented the

writer from using a cipher; or he knew the difficulties of John Smith, and was not courageous enough to hope that another editor would have the patience to work for three years like him; he took no risks, and left the MS. not only neatly written, but type-written so that it might be easy for the compositor, too ! Never was a diarist so provident. When this rich legacy of ten thousand pages descended to his friends, the problem was who should claim the honour of becoming the Editor. And each showed laudable generosity, and a spirit of self-sacrifice in renouncing his claim in favour of another; till at last, the present writer, coveting fame more than the rest, undertook to publish such extracts as should, in his humble opinion, be most expressive of the personality behind those myriad pages, and unite the biographical with the historical according to the original intentions of the Diarist !

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*July 19.*—It is such a consolation to think that schooldays are over and I have attained the dignity of a college student, that is to say, a

gentleman. Our professor actually calls me *Mr. Dombey*, though the Principal still insists on calling us by our christian names. His age of course excuses it; but he ought to know that we are no longer schoolboys. He is not merely content with inflicting this indignity upon us; he further coins such funny diminutives from our names as would never occur even to the fondest parent. He seems to think that Indian names are remarkably phable; and if he sincerely relishes his habit, I am sure, he must be secretly repenting that he was born an Englishman with a stiffer name. As it is, we all laugh at one another and coin more and still more of this stuff to tease our associates, and more particularly those among us who have either a big moustache or a grave look. It is so refreshing to pull down the crests of these so-called seniors with impunity. Those who combine in their person both these excellences have a very bad time of it.

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*August 4:*—I have come to stay in the College Hostel. It is so convenient in this bad

season. The sad plight of the day-scholar on rainy days confirms the wisdom of such a step. For the weather is extremely uncertain here. For days together the skies will be overcast, and not a drop will fall down; and at other times, all on a sudden, it will begin to pour down, as though it was 'in the second month and seventeenth day of the month' (Mr. Dombey's acquaintance with the Old Testament was thorough). So the poor day-scholar does not know when to take his water-proof, and when to leave it at home. To carry it on dry days is such an encumbrance; not to have it on wet days is such an inconvenience. The best thing is to stay in the Hostel.

But even this is not an unmixed evil. We have to get up very early for the compulsory morning exercise. They do'nt see I am stout enough and need'nt be stouter. It is such a hardship to leave the warm bed and walk out in the chill to hear the physical culturist lecturing! He tells us 'Morning exercise is so good that it will benefit you even if you have it in the

evening.' He is not only a demonstrator, but a lecturer too ! -

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*August 19:*—I am not sure whether the day-scholar is worse off after all. For our day ends at eight in the evening ! No cinema show, no circus, no carnival, in fact no evening engagement is over by this hour. Sometimes, it does not begin by eight ! We have to be in our rooms, like prisoners in their cells. We can't go to sleep so early. It seems, the college Authorities are enforcing the school-boys' rule, "early to bed and early to rise", here ! Are they not going to make any allowance for our newly acquired dignity ?

When this solitary confinement becomes boring, we have to tell what may be called corporate lies ! These lies are not morally so objectionable as isolated attempts to rebel against truth. They are an organised protest, if you will, and may be termed naughty, not wicked. When I could not return in time from the

Cinema Theatre last night, my neighbours spontaneously told the Dean that I had been out to the tap to fill water ! Now, there are only three taps on the college premises; and the Dean can, if he likes, always ascertain whether a boy is there or not. But we know, he won't do it. He is such a kind soul ! God bless him ! I have the same words for him which Lamb has for the Rev. Matthew Field. He knows we are human after all, and not machines. He respects discipline, but does not make a fuss of it. He allows for the human factor in this mechanical arrangement. He is the right man in his place.

*September 2.*—Today, our Professor of History taught us English, and of Persian, History ! It seems, any one can teach anything here ! The Professor, in this college, seems to be an omniscient being like the Village Schoolmaster of Goldsmith. The Principal has already shown himself to be an all-rounder. He goes to any class where the professor does not arrive in time, and starts teaching ! That's his novel method

of dealing with respectable late-comers ! It is so amusing to watch the late-comer standing outside, and this august substitute working in his place, as earnestly as though it was his own legitimate work; and then, a casual glance reveals the rightful claimant to this tactful intruder, and with a smile he ejaculates, " Oh, you have come, after all ! "

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*September 9:*—I repent having offered Logic as one of my optionals. Not that I do'nt like it; I only object to the hour at which it is taught in the college. One is not in a logical mood at 4-30 P. M. when Tennis has already begun, and you hear 'forty-fifteen' at the left ear and 'Inverse of the Obverted Contrapositive at the other. Even as it is, one would put up with Logic if it behaved like an electric lamp instead of an electric fan ! I mean, if it could be at once switched off at 4-30, instead of continuing to revolve after the college Bell has switched off not only Logic, but all its associates. This overtime labour is very inconvenient both to the teacher and the taught: from the students' point

of view, it is incompatible with Tennis which is the better of the two at that hour; and so far as the teacher is concerned, he is not paid overtime wages, but has to work purely in an honorary capacity after the 4-30 Bell has officially switched him off. Already this dear game has to face a formidable array of enemies: Rain, insufficiency of Courts, shortage of funds, the extra fees levied, the eternal prejudice that it is a game for Ladies, and so on. If Logic forms an alliance with these, I do not know what we shall have in place of the two Tennis Courts: open-air Logic classes? I wonder!

*April 12:—*We bid farewell to W. O. S. today. He was such a nice Principal. We shall always remember him. He was extremely good to us, though the Older Boys hold a different opinion. They think he was an autocrat because he abolished the democratic Gymkhana and resorted to a system of nominations. I don't understand these constitutional subtleties. This so-called Autocrat has, after all, chosen the right

men. We have attained fame and glory in every sphere. On the playground we are invincible. We have bagged all the trophies we competed for, and are now sighing like Alexander the Great that there are no more kingdoms to conquer in the realm of Sport.

He almost moved us to tears with his parting address. He had hoped to spend his last days in peace and contentment in this small college; but this was not to be. He was misunderstood, though he did everything with the best of intentions, and in the best interests of the college. I have never seen an Englishman growing so sentimental. Today he talked like a parent taking leave of his children. It was so touching, so human !

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*April 26:—*The college is closed for the Summer Vacation, and one by one our fellows are leaving us, making us more and more deserted. Our mighty Home is forsaken, and all the busy walks abandoned. The Club-bells no longer

stimulate our appetite. The breeze wipes off the footprints of familiar persons. Only a few stray cattle here and there, leave their footprints deep into the sands of the Tennis Courts.

I do not wish to return home like the rest of my fellows. I will continue to stay here. My home is a filthy place compared to the college Hostel. Not that I hate the people living in it—I only hate the place; it is so stuffy, so unclean, without any open space or garden in front, with only three rooms and four windows in all ! When I was a schoolboy, these defects escaped me. Now, it is impossible to spend one night there. The Hostel is my Home !

The more so in the vacation, because now it is all play and no work. There are no regular classes which I must unwillingly attend; no burning of midnight oil any more; no fear of the Dean confining me to my room at eight of the clock. Everywhere and at all times I am free and happy. There is the college garden where I may loiter all day long, if I like, and even

pluck the forbidden flowers ! I can walk across the Tennis Courts to take short cuts. There is nobody to disturb me doing anything and everything. In short, the ordinary college Rules do not apply to my case.

I think this, in itself, is a great boon ; for all my bondage comes from law ! When there is no one else except myself, there is no long-drawn code of law to check me. Then I am free. I wish to be somewhat lawless. Law has made my life too mechanical and unnatural. So instead of loving law or order, I only fear it because it has the power to defeat my natural inclinations.

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*May 5:—*I am glad R. has offered to bear me company in this desolate place. I wish to be left alone, but not absolutely alone. R. has made my solitude ever so beautiful. Our loneliness binds us closer than ever. Wherever I go, my companion follows. In all the joys and sorrows of life, we have become partners. Sometimes

when he begins to sing, I whistle. We play together, and read together, and eat together, and explore new realms of wonder every day by such reciprocity.

It is impossible to describe the affinity which one feels to another in such a solitary place. I often say to my companion, " But for thee, I feel like Robinson Crusoe on this desolate patch of the Earth. " And my companion warmly presses my fingers to corroborate me. We pass several days and nights without coming across a single " human face divine. " But for all this, we are never at a loss for want of company. I think, it is not so much the variety as the intensity of the association that is happy. To be able to move among twenty people with a good grace is no doubt fine; but, it is perhaps, finer still to adjust your life, more closely to the natural inclinations and acquired parts of a single individual.

*June 3:*—As we are living far away from the busy resort of men, we seldom have visitors. But those who come here become very familiar with us because there is no one else to attract them away. Thus we have become acquainted with a larger number of good persons than we could have expected in the most flourishing period of college activity. One eminent stranger remarked the other day, placing his hand on my shoulder, "Oh, your tea is simply a blessing in this place. I feel like a traveller in the Sahara desert quaffing large draughts of water in some patch of green verdure." Alas! hospitality must have its limits. If there had been a hundred visitors that day, I would have offered tea to none. As this gentleman was alone, I could do so, and even befriend him. Solitude without anything else will drive me mad. I do not want it absolutely. But I would be for limiting my company, so that our interests may always thrive, and that we may feel more attachment to individuals than we actually do when we walk the crowded street, or attend a big fair.

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Here ends the human interest in the Diary. It is disappointing to find after reading thousands of pages that the personality of the writer does not inform the whole. The ambition to become a historian in addition to a diarist seems to have enforced the tyranny of fact over feeling. The result is, we have a catalogue of minor details and events which cannot command universal interest. Even the intimate associates of Mr. Dombey find them boring. The Editor must suppress them. That the Diarist could have written more interesting stuff can easily be inferred from the above extracts; only he did not choose to write. As it is, the Editor has presented the needle which he found in this stack of hay.

## MY LAMENESS.

“ When I consider how my knoo is sprain’d, ”

I wonder whether to write a sonnet on the subject. That would be following in the footsteps of Milton. But, should a lame man follow a blind one ? In the story, the lame one rides on the shoulder and guides, and the blind one merely follows his instructions. Milton is, therefore, no suitable guide in this matter. And so I have decided to publish my misfortune under the auspices of the Montaigne Society, instead of the Homer Association.

But there is another, and a stronger reason, too, why I chose to write at some length instead of confining myself to the limits of a sonnet. It is my honest belief that my case is more pitiable than Milton’s. The world may not believe it; it has long been accustomed to regard blindness as a greater evil than lameness; and so it will at once vote in favour of Milton, and I shall be a

loser in this battle of sympathies. But I am willing to prove my case. Let me imagine myself and Milton pleading before an impartial Judge. Milton begins.—

“Your Lordship! I have lost my eyesight at this early age of forty-four. I have been working day and night to compose an immortal poem which should keep my name alive for all time, and be an ornament of the English language. All such ambitions have been nipped in the bud by this untimely loss. I have so far been able to write only a handful of poems: a masque and a few lyrics. Is it not a pity that all this preparation, all this training, together with the inborn genius for poetry which I fortunately possess, should be wasted? Can your Lordship imagine a greater misfortune? Surely, surely, I am the most unfortunate of God’s creatures, though I bear all my sorrow patiently.”

Then it will be my turn. His Lordship will call upon me to defend my cause. Trembling I come. I am already over-awed by the majesty

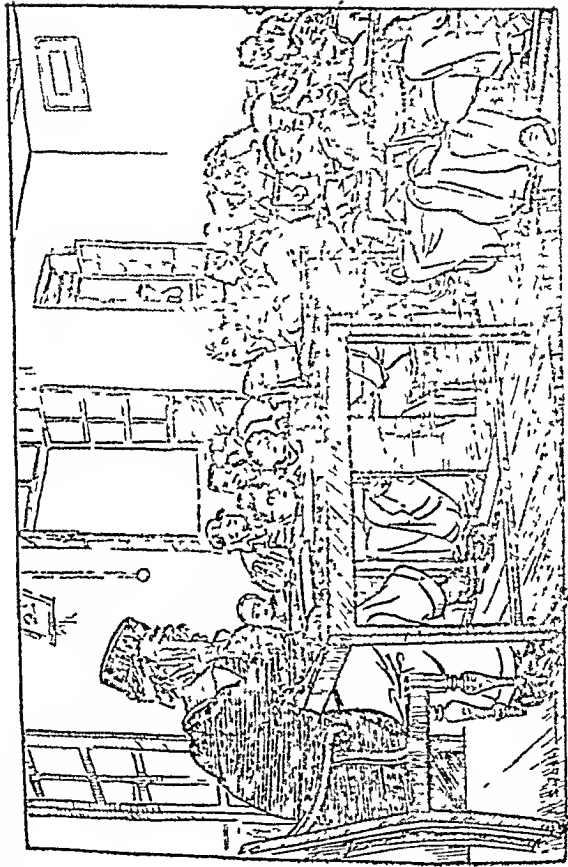
of the Judge, and still more of Milton. I am half inclined to give up my case. But the instinct of self-preservation and the justness of my cause make me bold, and I desperately begin:—

“Your Lordship ! In deciding between our contending claims for sympathy, I beg that my worthy opponent’s eminence should not bias your Lordship’s judgment. I will readily admit that from the point of view of our utility to the world, my great adversary is an infinitely more important person. He deserves to have the life-belt or parachute in preference over me. But at the present time, in this battle of sympathies, I beg to submit that his eminence is an entirely extraneous consideration. I begin, therefore, with the full assurance that your Lordship will judge on the merits of the case purely.

My humble submission is that I am the more pitiable of the two ! In the first place, I am not so eminent as my opponent is. That, in itself, is a pity ! He has at least some consolation that he has already produced ‘Comus’, ‘Lycidas’

and other poems; and he knows, they will keep his name alive even if he does not write a single line any more. But, why can he not write? His blindness has, in no way, deprived him of his powers of composition. On the other hand, it has helped him a good deal. He was making a wrong use of his gifts; writing pamphlets in stead of verses; and dissipating his energies in politics which is not the proper field for him. I therefore, plead that his blindness has come as a blessing in disguise. Now he will no longer dabble in other things; he will settle down to think. He will begin to look within, when he cannot see without. And there is already enough matter within his richly stored brain! His daughters can write to dictation, and he loses nothing by being blind; on the contrary he gains.

Whereas my case is, indeed, pitiable. I have had only twenty-nine years of fitness instead of his forty-four; and I have done nothing so far, which should be a consolation in my distress, as he has done. My ambition was to do my duty



"They also serve who only sit and wait."

and enjoy life. As regards doing my duty, I thank God, I can still do it. For our profession requires a good tongue, and not a good leg necessarily; and so long as we have a good tongue, we somehow get on with our work. For to put it more emphatically (if my opponent will not sue me in this Court, again, for borrowing from his sonnet ), in our profession,

“ They also serve who only sit and prate. ”

But work is not the main point. A man may not work, and still find life quite liveable. But he cannot have the heart to live if his enjoyment, his favourite hobby is denied him. The one hobby which in the words of Stevenson, I loved like a mistress, was my Tennis. I staked everything on it, and that is gone. It is true, I was never a great player; but I was always a very keen player. I could compare with any other player in the world, in this keenness for the game. If your Lordship wants, I can adduce the evidence of S. who will tell on oath ( he is very fond of oaths ) how keen a player I have been all these years. I have patiently waited

for four to five hours by the side of a tennis court to get half-an-hour's tennis in the end; I have sold my old books to buy a racquet; I have run to the court with wet clothes, when while bathing near the college well, some one told me there was a vacancy in one of the batches ! What have I not done to woo this well-beloved mistress ?

If there is any one thing of the earth that makes me forget my sordid existence, it is tennis; if there is any one thing that I associate with the regions of paradise, it is tennis. If I am to dream about heaven, it will be of nice green grass courts, with deep blue screens behind; three new balls, and the same number of pickers; a newly strung racquet; a suitable opponent on the other side of the net; a fine day; and perfect health and spirits ! If a man will not forget the rest of the world under such conditions, surely something is the matter with him. I verily believe, the Gods in the upper regions are all the while playing tennis on nice green grass courts, with new balls and pickers ! Pickers ? Where do

they get them from? Perhaps, they have deputed Death to get them from the earth, and we have become mortal !

Your Lordship might call it a dream. But I always begin to dream when I talk of tennis. I wish to point out that it is not the poets alone who dream, but also tennis enthusiasts. Tennis is poetry in action !

Your Lordship can judge, therefore, what it means to me, stopping tennis at the age of twenty-nine, when I hoped to play the game till the age of sixty. And playing tennis is very different from composing verses. You can compose the lines and ask your daughter to put them down on paper, and your printer to print them; and it makes no difference to you or to the world. But in tennis you cannot plan a stroke and ask another man to execute it. Thus my loss has been irreparable, whereas my opponent's loss can be made good."

Whatever might be the decision of His Lordship, ( the judgment is still pending ) I shall

always maintain that a tennis player's leg is much more important than a poet's eyes ! Our legs carry us so very easily and unostentatiously, that under healthy conditions we never think of them, and are apt to under-rate the service they render us all our life. To the animal the loss of one leg is only twenty-five per cent loss; but to a man it is fifty per cent, which is, indeed, serious. No single member of our body is as important as the leg. A man may do well without one ear, one eye, one hand, but not without one leg. It is very strange that we hardly recognise the status of our legs in our system, and rate them low because they happen to be the foundation, and not the upper terrace of our mansion. A man's eyes ( both eyes ) are more important in many ways, than both his legs; but his one eye is less important than one leg or one hand or one ear, or all the three taken together. Nelson could get on without an eye and hand; I wonder if he could do the same without one of his legs. In my judgment, one leg is worth an eye, an ear and a hand (left hand) taken together. And

## MY INSOMNIA

Many of those interested readers who were amused to read my essay on the subject of my Lameness, sent me a most humble suggestion, ( for which I am grateful ) that I should write another on my Insomnia, and were further pleased to add, " We would like to have an article from you for every illness of yours, so that in course of time we should have a really good collection of Essays " ! I was very much flattered to see them holding such a good opinion of my writing powers; though I felt alarmed, at the same time, that should their wishes bear fruit, I must remain a permanent invalid all my life.

But their very suggestion implies that it is not out of sympathy for my illness that they want to know more about it, but for a very different reason altogether, which to me seems to be plainly this; most of them don't believe in these illnesses

at all ! For they are all so sudden in their birth, and so protracted in their duration, that they seem to evoke the suspicious belief that they are purely creatures of my imagination, and not organic disorders for which there is any prescribable remedy. My physicians always thought so; and after I had paid them amply for their labour, every time they gave me the good news, in return of my money, that I was perfectly fit. They either seem to be of Cleopatra's opinion, and do not wish to tell bad news; or, they are trying, like honest business-men to give the maximum return for my investment. Any way, it is a suicidal policy for Doctors not to find anything wrong with their patients. They should say something at least, after, as in my case, thirty-three Shylocks have had their own way with the patient's pounds of flesh !

Though I could not succeed with my physicians, the utilitarians and worldly-wise ones, were partially convinced when they found me going on half-pay leave. They said with a gentle shake of the head, " the chap seems to be

thoroughly convinced about it; he has the strength of his convictions." They thought it impossible for a sane man to sacrifice so much for a mere frivolous reason. And they have already begun sympathising with me, more for this pecuniary loss, than for anything else. The more generous among them have actually offered to help me in this crisis on very reasonable terms, and no other security, except, my insurance policies, which they are pleased to promise me, would all be faithfully discharged to my legal heirs after deducting the capital and interest. Some have even allowed their generosity to outrun their good sense by promising me that they would forego the interest, in case the illness had fatal consequences.

But there still remains a large majority of my friends and acquaintances who do not believe in the illness at all, and often enjoy the imposition as they put it; and at other times make the most lucid suggestions to relieve me of my trouble. When they were told about the loss of sleep, one of them jumped for joy, and exclaimed, "Lucky chap! He can be doubly useful now," and in

Goldsmith's manner added ( crowding as many syllables in the line as passengers in a third class compartment ) :

"A watchman by night, a professor of literature by day".

A still more poetically disposed soul made the beautiful suggestion that I was now fit to guard the three Golden apples, and that my insomnia was a second myth in the making. A third one argued that my existence was not punctuated, every night, by eight or nine hours of total oblivion, but that I was enjoying a continuity of existence, which meant that I was more long-lived than ordinary persons.

There were some, however, who were not altogether so lightly touched by the event; and among them was my tailor who (God bless him ! ) was the first to enquire, in a mournful strain why I had not been getting new clothes stitched for a considerable time. He thought I had become leaner, and that my clothes did not suit nicely upon my body; and that if I ever condescended to give him a trial, he would adapt them to the

changed dimensions; and, what is more, make them tight enough to cover all risk of my becoming leaner still, which he most apologetically added, seemed inevitable. I was amused to find him so prudent as to provide for my future, also, and simply said, I had no need of them as I was once more dwindling into my old clothes which I had discarded, but to which I was now returning like a repentant prodigal.

Another disinterested sympathiser was an unemployed graduate who came to enquire after my health, and after having expressed the deepest concern for my welfare, advised me most solemnly not to risk going back to duty, but to take a long holiday among the hills of the North, adding with becoming humility that during my absence on sick leave, some mediocre person as himself (he was in a most self-deprecating mood) would have to keep the fires burning: a genuine student of literature, he would have spoilt the melodramatic effect of the situation without such a burning metaphor! I expressed my grateful thanks, and said I would act up to the kindly

suggestion; only begging that I might as well be allowed to stay in my native place, instead of being ordered north, which he generously conceded before bidding me a contented farewell.

While some were thus sceptical, others light-hearted, and others, still, struggling to sympathise, I was having the most harrowing experiences of my life. The disease was acting like a deadly corrosive silently undermining the wild energy of my body and soul. I could put up with the physical weakness it brought in its train; but what was worse, and beyond my power of endurance, was the mental and nervous weakness which shook my faith in myself, and produced the most savage fits of despair that I have ever seen or known. The buoyancy of spirit in me was crushed, and the first manifestation of it was my growing indifference to those authors who had been the greatest favourites with me, and had given me moments of the most hearty laughter and enjoyable fun. The height of degeneration was reached when I put aside R. L. S. and P. G., and took up religious books, and, among others,

two volumes of Milton, which I carried in my suitcase all the way to a hill station. I caught up several unmanly superstitions, like so many infectious fevers; and the worst of them were certain formalities of worship, which led me to believe that I would be able to please God that way, and obtain His pardon; and which, in the end, would have succeeded in making a complete atheist of me, if my faith in God had been based upon a less sure foundation. I purchased with my money sweet prophecies from astrologers, and saw them all falsified, one by one, by the great one of actual events! It would be amusing to tell how I tied several strange varieties of thread round my arm, drank charmed draughts of water, put all shapes of amulets round my neck and wrists, and repeated out-landish syllables to propitiate nymphs, spirits, ghosts, witches and a whole host of supernatural beings that were somehow annoyed with me, or, at any rate, entertained some grudge for an offence of which I was not conscious. I have made a fool of myself in innumerable original ways, and have

at last returned to that excellent mood of complete resignation, which is the line of least resistance.

The fact is that apart from the physical symptoms which can be easily accounted for as being the results of a total nervous prostration, that which baffles my doctors, and produces disbelief among my friends and well-wishers, is the peculiar state of my mind, which is not one of hallucination, or dream, or morbid melancholia, or any known state of dementia whatsoever; it is simply the nemesis of extreme egotism which, I must confess, is my greatest virtue, and also my greatest failing. It has helped me to derive happiness in the purest form, from the least objectionable modes of living, and has dispensed with all those accessories of joy upon which the mind feeds, such as love, faith, music, wine and tobacco. It is this that has now become my curse. Being a great lover of myself, I cannot love another with the burning passion of a poet, and continue to live in misery for his or her sake. Being interested equally in all the healthy pursuits of life, I cannot

single out any one which would act as a soothing balm, and make me oblivious of my wretched state, except, perhaps, the greatest of them, Tennis, which has become impossible to me due to my extreme weakness, and which I am now merely content to watch passively at a distance like an old man of seventy. I have become incapable of living for the sake of any particular interest, since my interest is only concentrated in myself. And so the sheer ennui of existence is my greatest torture. I wish to *live*, not merely to *exist*. And as I cannot live in the manner I like, I have got disgusted with my existence also.

Insomnia is the worst of diseases for all, and more particularly for egoists like myself. It denies you rest, which means that it denies you freshness. Your capacity to enjoy is not renewed after rest, but is allowed to exhaust itself at one continuous stretch, leaving you in a state of utter bankruptcy at the end of the precious experience. And so, unless some interest outside yourself is able to make life fresh for you, you are undone.

## ESSAYS

I have been madly in pursuit of such an interest, but have failed to pin my proud self to anything in particular outside me. Life has become stale for want of rest, that is to say, freshness. And I am waiting, in the most resigned spirit, and yet with a child's eager sense of curiosity to have the one experience which is still not stale to me, and which can be stale to none, for it comes but once, and then it never comes, and nothing ever comes.

## OF A NEWSPAPER COLUMN

A patient of Insomnia, my arrears of sleep are sometimes partially made good by Dreams and Reveries. This mode of repaying the debt brings little comfort to the body, though it often proves entertaining to the mind. It is a short-lived pleasure, however, and does not outlast the subconscious experience. It is forgotten, and discontent and discomfort persist to remind me that my sleep was unsound. Only on very rare occasions, its arresting novelty drags it into vivid consciousness, and Memory, like a kind nurse, fondly brings up this strange child of the dreamland, as though it was an actual reminiscence.

I remember, the present one was born on the 13th Sept. I had arrived home after a lonely and tiresome journey during which "The Daily News" was my solitary companion. The

sky was overcast, and the dark night, unwilling to be companionless like me, had summoned thunder and rain and the destructive lightning to keep her company. It was a very bad time for travellers and men of business. For idlers, gamblers, Bridge players, and readers of fiction, it was an ideal one. I had closed the doors and windows to exclude the chill blast; but thoughts and images, not to be excluded, like sound waves, managed to break in, inspite of these barriers, and pictured a whole world of fancy in the small space of the snug room where I lay, as usual in the fruitless expectation of sleep! I heard the stroke of twelve, but unlike Marcellus and Bernardo, could not hear the next one: for, I suppose, I was already roaming in the land of Dreams, and had encamped, in some Etham, in the edge of the wilderness, when a column stood in front of me, not so tall, nor so bright, as its Biblical predecessor, but more clearly defined, more communicative! It reared its full height of thirty inches, and as if taking pity on me, spoke in English instead of Hebrew!

"You deserve all that you have suffered, and much more, ungrateful one", said the Pigmy shape, "for you knew me once, and were eager to renew my acquaintance, from day to day, when you were yet unemployed. My brothers published sensational stuff; but you cared little for them. The rise of the Labour party did not make you happy, nor could you be touched by the fall of the Conservatives. No momentous change in the politics of the world, no earthquake, no flood, no sensational victory in tennis or cricket, no new records established, no old ones smashed, no story of mysterious crime, in short, nothing that they reported ever gladdened or worried you. Like the Laodiceans, you were neither hot nor cold towards these events, but kept a steady eye on your own future, which you thought, could be moulded only with my assistance.

"I took pity on you and helped you to a modest living allowing your claims to supersede those of many an old devotee of mine. But since that very moment, the sense of being well-fed

and well-clothed has acted upon you like an intoxicant, and has made you neglect even those formalities of friendship which ought to have subsisted between us, let alone the benefaction. Since then, you have not looked me up even once, though, I know, you have been a regular reader of newspapers and have 'dulled your palm with the entertainment' of such of my brothers as could give you nothing more than the condition of the weather, or the fluctuations in the market ! That was, indeed, most unkind ! You could have come to me, if not for yourself, at least for those friends of yours who were in want and distress ! But your head was in the clouds, and you forgot that you were all the while standing on the earth !

"It is this *Hubris*, in the Greek phrase, that has brought the *Nemesis* upon you. You lost all sense of propriety. You should have realised that those other brothers of mine, are after all the prodigal sons of their mother, undoing her resources which I am all along helping to build up. They are, besides, morally depraved, and

indulge in all kinds of lies and inflated statements, whereas, I speak the truth and nothing but the truth. They are leading the life of a parasite, whereas I am a self-respecting member of the family ! They are subjected to all sorts of indignity by the all-powerful Editor, but he dare not touch me with his Procrustean sword !

" And, besides, your own experience should have taught you that I am the most effective weapon against the great Monster Unemployment which is plaguing the whole world, and especially, the flower of the youth. They all love me for this, and their love has all along been growing from more to more. I come as a Saviour to many of them, and they sooner believe in my revelations than, perhaps, in what the Great Saviour has himself revealed unto them ! I am like Noah's ark in the general inundation ! I am like the miraculous pitcher which is ever full ! I am like the cloud and pillar to the starving, unemployed Moses of all time.

" If I had lived in the time of Pharoah, I should have helped him to build a finer pyramid.

If I was in Babylon, their tower would have made nearer approach to heaven. If Shahjehan had imported me from the West, I would have summoned the beauty of Sculpture to set off Architecture, and left an image in marble of the peerless queen ! But it is no use telling all this to an ungrateful wretch like you ! Let me only warn you, and not praise or describe myself ! If ever you come to me again, remember, I have no place for you ! ( Don't suppose that I am revengeful; I don't believe in that kind of wild justice. ) I simply can't help it. Should your disease disable you for your present occupation, make you inefficient, and should those to whom I recommended you, eight years ago, get rid of you on that pretext, don't come to me again for help. I have no place for you. "*Wanted* men !" is no longer the cry in this mechanical age: much less, 'second-hand' men like you ! I am a chronicler of human wants for all time ! Therefore, take me seriously when I say this. If you were a second-hand car, I could have helped you to a purchaser; but you are only a second-hand

change for the better. If you will not shelter me after I am declared inefficient, and discarded, I shall not misunderstand you; for I know your difficulties. You may or may not help me, as you will. But, those who will discard me, may have to seek your assistance to get my substitute. Their cry will still be, "*Wanted* men!" not machines. Pray, help them, if not me!"

The stroke of two of the clock put a sudden stop to this interesting colloquy; for the mysterious form disappeared, like a ghost flying at the sound of the 'bird of dawning;' and I was, once more, restored to my ever-wakeful, uneasy condition in bed!

## AN UNDERSTAMPED LETTER.

LONAVALA

*June 1st.*

My dear.....,

Your letter is so touching in its solicitude about my welfare, that it has brought a ray of hope to me that my people would not be left friendless after I have diminished their number. It is a pity that you are not by my side here in this lonely place; but, even if you were, I do not suppose, you could have spoken so well as your lifeless messenger. I myself have experienced in these matters, the awkward movements of the tongue compared to the dexterous strokes of the hand; and have always felt that the custom of joining hands has come into being just because the hand can write what the tongue cannot express. I know, you will add in a plea, in support of your pair of blue eyes. Of course, I must concede anything to them: "Others abide our question; they are free".

I am glad, you believe in my disease after all. It was so difficult for me to convince you about it. I am, however, amused to find your hope getting the better of your understanding. Else, you would not have pictured your erstwhile partner in Tennis repeating his performance at the ensuing Lawn Tennis Tournament. I should be extremely sorry to forego the privilege; but I know, I must not mar your chances; for I have been informed by those who need not have flattered you, that you have put in a lot of sting in your strokes and have reduced your bulk—which is a great thing ! By all means, choose a suitable substitute, and take my best wishes, if not me, with you to the combat. It is simply madness to hope that I shall be fit by November. Perhaps, to tell you honestly, I may never be fit at all. For I feel within me the Enemy growing stronger every day, and it is as likely as not, I may have to watch you from the air, instead of the stalls.

When I talk like this, you at once shut my mouth with your favourite "nonsense"! But you can't stop my pen, like that, at least when

I am writing from such a distance. Therefore let me be serious. Last night, I slept very badly. I was practically counting every stroke of the pendulum. They have a big clock, here, in the Central Room, which they are not willing to shift elsewhere. That is a more advanced case of Insomnia, isn't it? Well, I and the senior patient, were communing till day-break, when I rose up in contempt, which familiarity always brings, and withdrawing myself from the Ever-Wakeful One, thought, I might just make a will, as everyone does who feels that his days are numbered. You are a lawyer, and you know the proper form in which to put it! If you had been in my place—which God forbid!—you should have expressed yourself in a form which could be straightway admissible in the Registration Court. I am an indifferent hand at formal compositions, and my *will*, like the rest of my writing, is formless. Therefore don't laugh at it. I do not propose to register it too. I only tell you what I feel would be the correct disposal of my 'havings'. If the Insurance money comes in,

you will have some work; otherwise, there is little to divide, and let them fight it out. Let us, however, take the sunny side of it, and anticipate the fruit of my 'compulsory' prudence ! Let's say the money is there ! I think the best way would be to make two broad divisions; Mother and Brother on the one side, and Wife (or rather Widow ) and Child on the other. You will appreciate the justice of this division, for I am providing for one full life-time and one partial one ! The partial ones on either side are my old mother and my young daughter. I am sure, my mother won't outlive me long; similarly, my daughter would soon be married. She has, fortunately, not inherited my looks; and so there won't be much trouble about getting a young man to like her. I even flatter myself that there would be some, in refusing all, except one of those who would have her ! These cancel each other. Then my brother should, normally, cancel the Widow, unless she takes a fancy (which by all means is most commendable) to marry another; or he takes it into his head to

lead a single life. In either case, the evenness of the allotment must be disturbed, and my original purpose defeated. I cannot, however, make certain on either head. It's too delicate a question for the *wife* to answer what the *widow* will do ! And as for my brother, he is so young that it is useless to depend upon what he will say, one way or the other. So there's the *flaw* in the *deed* ! Am I not perfectly legal here ? If you say no, I'll adduce Shakespeare to silence you !

After the allotment must follow some general instructions to show that the prospect of Death arouses not merely the dormant prudence, worldly wisdom, and sense of justice in the man, but, also, lets loose those freaks of his nature which these three formidable forces keep under subjection for the most part. One of these is, perhaps, not so divorced from reason as a whim or a freak generally should be; therefore, let me give it precedence. Let not my widow *shave her head* in the manner of my cousin ! I know, they will coax her in a number of ways, and religion

will be their strongest persuasion. But, see that she is to this extent irreligious. I don't suppose she will go to hell just for this; and if she does, she is sure to meet me there; for it is my will, not hers ! Apart from the serious objection I have to this outrageous custom, I say this, just because I *like* her long black hair ! Another prominent member of this family of "the unreasonable ones" is my wish, that my diary, which I have regularly kept, just because it pleased me to let my Past have a stronger support than what the crutches of Memory generally afford, should die a *Sati's* death ! I do not want to show more of myself than can be gathered from my queer 'Essays'. You have promised to get them a publisher, in case, they are left orphans. So I have no anxiety on their account. They will be my memorial, my tomb, if ever my friends want one to commemorate me. And let me be as nice as Browning's Bishop about ordering it. Let them be printed on 56lb. feather-weight paper, and bound in cloth. As to the golden lettering on the cover, or pictures inside, let the publisher

decide. He knows best how to dress a book in the most attractive style. My little ones need decent accoutrement, you know, to make them presentable; for their beauty is not such as will attract an Acteon's gaze. And lastly, it is my wish that the Dedication should be to Professor Dobson. You will, perhaps, think, I am trying to repay the debt I owe my Headmaster, Professor, Departmental Head, and Vice-Principal! No, you are mistaken! I am dedicating to the *Man*! He conquered his insomnia with his cheerfulness; I allowed mine to dig its claws deeper, with my gloom. That's the secret. It is loathed Melancholy's tribute to heavenly Euphrosyne!

I will write more in my next, for I am afraid, I have only an anna stamp with me which will not carry all this load of sentiment and sense. Let me not break the poor camel's back. So adieu.

Yours wilfully,  
 .....

## THE FOWHOUGH CLUB

The untimely death of Mr. D. has all but dissolved the so-called Fowhough Club, which for twenty long years had been a radiating focus of periodical disturbance to an otherwise quiet surrounding. Not that Mr. D. was himself a noisy neighbour; he was, on the contrary, a sober gentleman, almost, if not quite, a philosopher on whom cheerfulness seldom broke in; but, when on Sundays he imported the contents of a small four-seater, his home which was otherwise fit enough for a Quakers' meeting, resounded, in the dead hours of the mid-night, with cries of hearts, clubs, clubs!, reminding one of the good old Tudor days. It was difficult to imagine how only four, of whom one was known to be a quiet fellow, could produce all that noisy hilarity. One would have thought, there were at least twenty, discussing, if not actually exchanging blows there; and yet, I know it for a fact, that the Fowhough Club had only

four members. "four horsemen," as they fondly termed themselves.

How it came to be called the Fowhough Club is more than I can say. The origin of this name is still enveloped in a mystery; and all I can suggest is that it occurred to some one to name it thus, just in the same unaccountable manner as it occurred to Dickens to call Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Pickwick. Perhaps, it was an abbreviated form of the "four horsemen" which epithet is, however, amenable to suggestion. And I have two plausible theories to offer, though I will not lay a wager, that any one of them explains the actual motive behind the name. One of these is not very simple; and, perhaps, it does not seem to have been the real motive; as it goes rather deep and depth is not what we might expect from such a noisy group. As the four members met, ostensibly for playing cards, and as two of them were dark, and two fair, they thought they would become symbols of the four colours represented in the game, and thus resemble the four symbolic

Horsemen of the Apocalypse. The other theory has, perhaps, greater pretensions to truth, and may prove to be the real explanation for all I know. These four, like the American citizen described by Jerome K. Jerome, never walked ! What raised them above the degree of pedestrians was, as in the American's case, the fact that one out of the four had a car, and the other three crowded in !

These " Four Horsemen ", were, it seemed, not " spirits of the other sort ", described by Puck, but were, rather like Hamlet's father's ghost, or Hecate's followers, and met by night, seldom by day. As the shadows lengthened towards the East, in the quiet hours of Sunday-eventide, one could see the elongated felloes of the four-seater slowly advancing in the direction of Mr. D's room. " Business first, pleasure afterwards ", seemed to be the motto of the Club; for no sooner did the spokes of the wheels cease going round and round, than the cards, fond of imitation like small children, began their round at the deal table ! As a matter of principle, none

was allowed to bring his watch in the Bridge Room. Time was to be measured by sunrise and sunset. The clock in Mr. D's room was covered with a piece of black cloth, like a muffled drum; and as it did not sound the hours and half-hours, it was not thought necessary to banish it to another room. Even muffling was unnecessary, as a matter of fact; for once the play began, none had a thought for time, or for anything else in the world, besides Spades, Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, No Trumps, Grand Slams, Little Slams, Doubled and re-doubled bids, and things of the kind. Tea or supper were unnecessary, and taken only when served by Mr. D's wilful servant, never to order; and often the boiling potion was allowed to attain the status of cold coffee or ice-cream ! Even the Dummy had no respite. That silent, in-effectual, prostrate person never surrendered his interest in the game, though he surrendered his cards ! All was excitement from start to finish. No whispers were allowed; no secrets cherished. All was above-board, and expressed in the most

emphatic and unrestrained fashion. Each seemed to imagine that the others were sitting at least a hundred yards away, and were, besides, rather hard of hearing ! When Mr. W for instance, was defending his fourth-hand bid, this distance, like an elastic rubber strip, increased to two hundred; and this had the desired effect; for the watch-dogs in the neighbouring houses at once started barking together, and Mr. D's land-lord starting up in his bed, uttered some not very complimentary words within the distinct hearing of his tenant. They were, however, not heard, drowned in the noisy chorus of the dogs, and the weighty arguments at the table; otherwise it is not easy to understand how Mr. D could have put up with them, and continued to live contentedly there, and even smiled when he met the offended one. I am sure, the latter, would have refused Mr. D even ordinary courtesy due to a stranger, if he had met him on Monday mornings; but this nightly vigil always kept the offenders in bed till ten or ten-thirty, by which time the last echoes of the noisy argument subsided, and

the incensed one was pacified in the hope that he would have at least a week of peaceful existence.

The volume and intensity of this noisy argument were not the only grounds on which the neighbours should have lodged their protest; what was, perhaps, more shocking was the liberty which Mr. W. took with the grammar of all the languages which he condescended to use in the course of the discussion. Like a chemist making experiments with various substances, he seemed to be making experiments with all the vernaculars of India, perhaps, to come to a right conclusion regarding what should be the *lingua franca* of the continent ! And as Hindi seemed to have the best chance, he was particularly severe in testing the elasticity of that vernacular. His main thesis seemed to be that loudness and boldness of utterance could replace grammar and idiom in any language. And he actually showed how he could make himself understood, without paying the slightest heed to gender, number and person, the proper tenses, and things of the kind. In that huge kingdom

of words, he was trying to become a social reformer and a revolutionary by abolishing the distinction of gender or sex; with the result that in his speech, one could find a whole anarchy of Bolshevism, and words ineffectually coupled together as though a Rosalind was married to a Phoebe ! " Fluency, " he used to reply to the objectors, " Fluency is what matters. If you can be fluent, you need not be anything more. " Indeed, he was very fluent; the lesser his proficiency in any language, the more eloquent he seemed to grow, making up for the one defect by the other compensatory virtue, till at last he reached the heights of Demosthenes and Burke in the *lingua franca* of his nation !

Only muscle, not grammar nor idiom, could meet the force of such an argument; and muscle, the others had in plenty. Mr. F. for instance, always backed his own {reply with his strong physique, and silenced his opponent more with his rolling eye and doubled fist ( which of course he never used ) than with a clever manipulation of words ! On the Bridge Table

he showed an uneasiness of disposition though at heart he was a very good gentleman: which only helped to amuse his companions who were never frightened by his rough exterior, but tried their best to add fuel to fire in the same way as the manager of a circus, not frightened by his roaring lions and tigers, purposely fans their rage with his crackling whip to produce the better fun. If this uneasy disposition had been allowed to be the exclusive monopoly of the club, it would always have been a good joke; but as it escaped in the presence of strangers, who only touched the rind, and not the core, it helped to produce misunderstandings which were hard to reconcile, and sometimes impossible to forget. It was a pity that he should have been so intolerant of mistakes in the Game; for all commit mistakes and strangers more often offend unconsciously in this respect. If they are taken to task for every little thing that they happen to miss in the course of the play (which is to them a mere pastime rather than a serious study), they often form a wrong estimate of the person

and unnecessarily touch the rough shell in stead of the soft pulp underneath.

While the tongue was thus fighting the innocuous muscle, the two amused spectators were not slow to become worthy seconds to these principals. Mr. R. lent muscle to the thin orator, whereas Mr. D. lent argument to the fiery pugilist. The balance of power was thus maintained, and no untoward consequences were anticipated. Mr. R. was a happy-go-lucky sort of man, unperturbed by anything except by empty dishes ! He was a remarkable glutton with a stomach capacious enough, like an ocean. Yet it could not be said of him, as of Antony, that he ate strange flesh which others would have died to look on. For his fastidious tongue, acting like a quarantine officer, refused admission to those eatables which did not bear the stamp of the very best quality on them. Like Falstaff, he was two yards about the waist, but unlike Mr. Pickwick, the veracity of his optics could be trusted without the aid of glasses ! He always

maintained a cheerful look provided he was well-fed, and never worried over those subtleties of the game over which the others were on the point of waging a bloody war. The reason, perhaps, was that being a businessman, he found Bridge a mighty tame form of gambling in which a few chips won or lost did not matter much to him. He played the game more like a gambler than like a calculating mathematician, ascertaining in Culbertson's manner whether there were 2.5 or 2.6 tricks for the original bid, or 1.5 or 1.6 for the support. He judged by instinct the general possibilities of the hand, and this rule of the thumb often proved more successful than the mathematics of the others which they carried to such elaborate perfection as to find values upto three places of decimals !

Mr. D was, however, incapable of this daring spirit of gambling in the game; and tried his best to calculate and think and maintain a reputation in which no one believed except himself, that he was the best player of the group. He sincerely thought that he was incapable of a mistake in

Bridge, and never admitted his mistakes even if in the opinion of others he often committed blunders. So far as Bridge was concerned, he never repented, like Montaigne, for what he had done; and if the same cards had been dealt him again he would have played exactly in the same manner. This overweening confidence in his own skill at the game made him incapable of taking his defeats cheerfully; and he made such a wry face over small losses, as if some Bacchaiskakoo had dispossessed him of a whole kingdom. It was exactly this failing which accounted for his failure in life; for when he no longer remained "the button on Fortune's cap", but became the "sole of her shoes", he could not bravely sustain the pressure, and pathetically succumbed for sheer lack of patience. His friends tried their best to assure him that the wheel would go up. But he could not be convinced. Nothing could put new guts into him. He pined away like one overcome by a wasting disease, and in the end, lay on his death-bed surrounded by his helpless associates who were no longer noisy, but

held their tongues in silent pity, and with long faces watched life oozing out of the poor victim. Then, and only then, the confident player admitted his mistake for the first time, and made a confession in these words: "I am dying twenty years before my time; let me make my last confession. I have played all these years, but have not caught the real spirit of the game. Keep the Fowhough going. Don't let it die with me. Bridge with stakes will teach you how to bear your losses cheerfully. Life itself is a gamble, even as Bridge is! Only don't be unnerved by a run of bad luck as I have been." These were his last words. He left no instructions regarding his funeral; yet the others, respecting the memory of their dear associate, thought that it should be consistent with the dignity of the deceased, and all put on the proper mourning dress, and in particular, brand-new canvas shoes, like a party of Tennis players, because it occurred to these ingenious ones, on that solemn occasion, that white is a colour, which according to the Indian custom

## THE FOWHOUGH CLUB

is most expressive of grief ! Out of their Bridge winnings they set apart a small sum for publishing a news-paper obituary, and unanimously passed a resolution of condolence which was telegraphed to the bereaved family residing in town. And in the end, the businessman, beaming with satisfaction at having discharged his duties, vowed that if he ever became *sufficiently* rich, he would build a public Bridge Room to commemorate the Fowhough Club which Mr. D.'s death had all but dissolved.

## A MACHINE OR A HUMAN BEING ?

If Gopal had lived only upto his twenty-third year, there would have been little worth telling about him. The story of his life would hardly have occupied one printed page. The bulk of his biography could gain nothing from his parents' side; for their existence could be inferred from no other fact except that Gopal was living. He had no brothers and sisters; no uncles and aunts; no cousins of either sex. He was as much a victim of shipwreck, in his own way, as Robinson Crusoe was in his.

What he did on Mondays, he did on Tuesdays too; and he would repeat the same on all the other days of the week, except Sundays when he had some leisure to go to sleep after the fatigue of one week's labour. His life-history could be called the history of one single day; and each subsequent day simply added to the number, without in any way supplementing his

experience or augmenting his happiness. He would get up early in the morning in all the seasons of the year; and then he would hasten to fill tap-water, for he knew he had to join duty at six of the clock, after which hour he would not return till sunset; and then he would get no water for the whole night and would have to go thirsty to bed.

By six, he would be in the Bijoy Mills, working at his loom till twelve in the deafening music of wheels there. From twelve to one, he would eat his morning meal which he carried with him; and, again, from one to six, he would work at the loom in the deafening music of the wheels there.

And this he had been doing for several years, without the slightest change. The story of these years was the story of any one of his days at the loom. He seemed to be as much a part of the machinery as the wheels and screws there; and as such, he seemed to display no taste, volition, discrimination, yearning for change, in

fact no ordinary human feeling or tendency. He knew only how to manipulate the loom, how to produce the deafening din with the wheels, how to fill tap water and how to cook his coarse meal.

But even the best type of machinery goes wrong in course of time. It is not possible for anything to continue in the same manner, indefinitely. There is bound to be some disturbance somewhere. Some screw would get loose; some wheel would lose its plane; some valve would need grinding; some pipe would need cleaning; some axle would need oiling; in fact, the whole machinery might need overhauling. Even so, the human machine; it has its moments of eccentricity, irregularity, buoyancy !

Gopal had worked like a machine for so many years. I have already said that the story of these years was the story of one day. He was now in his twenty-fourth year. By a most liberal calculation, the machine had worked long enough. It surely needed overhauling, before it could be made to work more.

At last, one fine morning, the last blade broke the camel's back. As Gopal was proceeding to the Mills, he thought, "Supposing I don't go to work this morning, and simply enjoy myself, what would come of it?" He convinced himself that the consequences would not be, in any way, disastrous. He would only lose the day's wages and, perhaps, receive a rebuke from the manager.

"Let me see what happens," he said to himself. "It's a fine morning, and I have known no holiday these ten years. I'll purchase it at my daily wages!"

The nemesis of 'robotism' had come down upon him too powerfully for him to resist. He sat himself down on the lawns by the side of the road and began to hear other music than the one he had been accustomed to in the Mills.

And, then, in that holiday mood, he cast a contemptuous glance upon other mill-hands who were hastening to the Mills to be in time. So

far, he had taken part in the procession, and as such could not be a spectator enjoying the sight of it. He found men, women, and children of all castes and varying ages, from twelve to sixty, proceeding towards the same destination with a hurried step. "See how they are hastening to go to hell," he said to himself, imagining, for the time being, how utterly impossible it was for him to condescend to do what they did.

And, then, he began to wonder how he had been one of them all those years; how the lawns on either side of the road had escaped his attention; how he had heard no birds and seen no colours in nature; how the sunrise had never attracted him before. "Won't you be late, Gopal?" said a mill-hand as he was running to be in time. "Wait, let us enjoy a brief space on these lawns here," he said to the other's inattentive ear, "Life is, indeed, beautiful here."

By half-past six, all had reached the Mills including the late-goers. The road once more regained its solitary appearance. The dust raised

by the mill-hands' hastening steps, as by a herd of cattle, again settled down, no longer obscuring the vision. It became a delightful spot, fit for fashionable people taking morning walks by way of recreation and exercise.

Among these pleasure-seekers was a young girl of about twenty who had put on a rich *sari* of gold-thread work, which shone in an exceedingly attractive manner under the red rays of the morning sun. She was followed by a servant at a distance, to whom the gait of his mistress, it was obvious, seemed tediously slow.

Gopal had become so much intoxicated with his new surroundings that he forgot all sense of propriety and asked in a facetious spirit, " Could you tell me, madam, which way leads to Bijoy Mills ? "

" You mean my father's mills ? " she asked.

Gopal was not prepared for this answer. He had simply found out a pretext to begin conversation with her. He could, as well, have

asked her another question equally unmeaning. But now he found that his question had launched him into a serious situation.

She was the Mill-owner's daughter, which fact at once brought Gopal to his senses. The difference in status made itself obvious to him. He thought, he should have chosen the servant and not the mistress for such waggery. He would, almost, have apologised to her if she had not repeated her question.

" You mean my father's mills, do you ? "

" I don't know, " he stammered, " but they call them the Bijoy Mills. It is a huge concern, with thousands employed there. "

The dignity of the Mill-owner's daughter would not have allowed her to condescend further, and hold a conversation with a menial of Gopal's type. But her vanity had been tickled. Gopal had called her father's concern a huge one. That was enough as a palliative for her to speak more.

" Oh yes, you are right," she said, " It is a very huge concern, indeed." This way leads there. If you like, you may accompany my servant. I'm going there to my father."

Gopal was further confounded. He did not wish to go to the Mills that morning. He had purposely stayed away. He was quite happy with the birds and flowers on those lawns. He had been a bit naughty, no doubt, in asking a stranger the way to the Mills which he had been treading for years. But he could not anticipate that such a question would involve the necessity of his going there.

" If I decline her offer," he thought to himself, " she would say, 'why did you ask me that question ? ' If I go with her servant, the manager will take me to task for what I have done. "

But he was in for it, and he could not back out at this stage. " I am much obliged to you, " he said to the Mill-owner's daughter, and joined her servant.

They reached the Mills' premises at about seven when the manager, according to his daily routine was taking a round. As soon as he saw the Mill-owner's daughter, he bowed his head respectfully.

"How do you do, Miss ? Good morning," said the manager.

"How do you do ? Good morning," she returned, "I'm quite well, thank you !"

"Do you come to see your father ? He's over there, talking to some visitors who have come to see our Mills," the manager said.

"We are getting lots of visitors now-a-days," she spoke with some vanity (not all she could command.) "Our Mills have become famous all over the country." "Of course, 'tis a huge concern," said the manager. "A huge concern, indeed !" replied the girl, looking at Gopal, who had described the Mills in those identical words.

The manager's attention was also drawn towards him by this act of sublime condescension on the part of the Mill-owner's daughter. He at once recognized him as he stood trembling, and roared, "How is it, you are here, Gopal?"

"Do you know him?" inquired the Mill-owner's daughter greatly surprised.

"Of course yes," said the manager, "he has been working here these ten years."

"Working here these ten years! Then why should he inquire of me the way leading up to these Mills?"

"Did he do so?"

"Yes! He showed as though he knew nothing about the Mills."

In the opinion of the manager, Gopal deserved no less a punishment than hanging for this grave offence; but he was sorry, the I. P. C. made no provision for it.

"I dismiss you on the spot for this grave mischief," said the manager angrily.

" If you will hear me, sir, I hope to explain myself," Gopal said with great show of meekness.

" You don't deserve as much," said the manager, " I have pronounced, my verdict and it cannot be revoked. "

" I pray you, don't dismiss him on my account," said Miss Mill-owner, " let us know his reason for such a curious behaviour."

" Your gentleness greatly encourages me, madam," said Gopal, " It is true, I have behaved strangely; but I must say that I did not expect the sequel which followed my question. Madam, we mill-hands lead an abject sort of life, the fearful monotony of which leads us to impropriety of behaviour in a hundred different ways; yet, if you could believe me, I would insist on pointing you out that my motive in asking such a question was so light as to be ignored as a stupid act rather than be punished as a serious offence. "

By now, the Mill-owner with his visitors had arrived on the spot; and they, too, were interested in such a queer incident as the present one.

"But," said the Mill-owner, "you must explain why you were still sitting on the lawns when it was past six of the clock."

"My master," said Gopal, "you must take a sympathetic view of the situation before I can impress upon you why I did so. I have been regularly working here these ten years; and during this period I have not known a single holiday. These ten years were nothing except monotonous repetitions of one day—one day of hard toil from morning till evening, without rest, without recreation, without cheer. To-day my nature has revolted against this monotony, and I have sought to enjoy a holiday with such results;" and after a brief pause he added, "I do not think this is altogether peculiar to me. Others in my condition of life would be capable of similar madness. For we mill-hands are *human beings first and mill-hands afterwards.*"

The manager was on the point of ordering him to stop this nonsense; but Miss Mill-owner and the visitors were greatly impressed by Gopal's argument; and they requested the manager to excuse him for an act, for which, they agreed, he was but partially responsible. The Mill-owner also agreed to view the matter lightly when he saw those importunate visitors arguing in Gopal's favour; and as a mark of special grace, Gopal was granted three days' leave on full pay.

The moral of this simple incident was not lost upon the visitors. They pressed for the inauguration of certain pleasure-houses for these poor workers, which would become social clubs for them, where they should renew their consciousness, every evening, that they belonged to the same species as the rest of mankind. They canvassed, wrote in papers, sent deputations, held meetings and passed resolutions to further this project.

"The matter is receiving my special attention," replied the Mill-owner, with all the

gravity he could command. He has not been able to decide yet, whether the Mill-hand is a machine or a human being!

## WIDOWS AND THEIR SALVATION

The mellow hour of sunset had called home all those who had been working hard by day, and wished to enjoy their well-deserved repose in the quiet hours of the night. The ploughman, the clerk, the labourer, the sportsman, the businessman—all were quickening their steps homewards. There was only one person who did not join the procession; and she belonged to the sisterhood of women dressed in dark-red robes.

It was clear from her manner of walking that she was not going home. As a matter of fact, she gave the impression that she, probably, had no home at all. She had no ornaments on her body; her feet were bare; she did not carry an umbrella, though the sky was overcast. As it was getting dark, the colour of her *sari* could not be marked; yet, there was little doubt that it was dark red, and no other. She was looking

down, perhaps to avoid the possibility of stumbling. And though all reliable witnesses of her age had been removed, none could have mistaken her for a young woman.

Presently, she reached a temple where a large number had gathered together from this dark-red sisterhood. It was a huge gathering made impressive owing to the official 'dark-red' uniform.

There was, however, one in this august assembly who, even to the casual eye, would have seemed an exception. This person was dressed in white, and the manner of dress was also quite different. The portion below the nose, in the present case, seemed to darken a good deal, thus showing a sharp contrast to all others assembled there. On closer view, this person could easily be marked out as a man with a big black moustache, and a tuft of hair in the centre of his head which, otherwise, resembled the heads of the other members of the group.

He had a book in front of him, which was not properly bound, it seemed; for the leaves were lying loosely in a heap. He took one leaf at a time, read some lines from it, and then delivered his comment in an eloquent and impressive manner.

All the members of the sisterhood were listening to him with rapt attention. Some of them were even nodding assent to every word that he uttered. While their higher selves were, thus, busy gathering the fruits of the 'white' man's wisdom, their lower selves were busy in a most characteristically utilitarian manner; for their fingers could be seen cleverly manipulating some white substance, presumably cotton.

The late-comer who has just been described received admission to this group without the slightest reproof, though she amply deserved it for having been late, and further, for going straight up to a lady sitting there who obviously did not belong to the group of 'dark Red ones'.

This last differed from the 'dark Red ones' in more respects than one. The official uniform was not on her body. She had allowed a large mass of long black hair to grow on her head. She was not quaffing the white man's draughts of wisdom as the others were doing. Her lower self was not busy in the utilitarian manner described above. She had not the cheerful look of the rest of the company. Though young, she did not look fresh; though beautiful, she did not seem to be inviting. She could not exactly fit in there.

"I've arranged for everything," said the late-comer to her in a low whisper.

"When do we start?" inquired the other.

"We start at seven, and reach Ujjain at nine," was the reply.

And, then, the late-comer wishing to glean her humble share of wisdom began to listen to the white-robed one, without ceasing, at the same time, to be a Benthamite with the white substance in her hands. Meanwhile, the young fly

in the utilitarian amber continued to remain inactive and reticent.

Everything was ready the next morning. The Benthamite came half an hour before the appointed time. The hairy one was also ready.

They should have proceeded without any trouble, if the ten-year old son of the hairy one had not insisted on accompanying them. The boy seemed determined not to leave his mother, though the Benthamite used all sorts of persuasions and threats. At last, they had to take the boy with them; for they feared they would, otherwise, miss the train.

The prophecy of the Dark Red one was fulfilled, and the train entered Ujjain Railway Station at nine of the clock.

Five or six fat men came to receive them at the station. Each one was willing to be their host. They seemed to be extremely philanthropic souls, actuated strictly by charitable motives. They showed a huge tolerance for

guests of all sorts. They courted as many of them as were willing, and even pressed as many as they could. The young lad was deeply moved by their goodness.

"Mother, see how kind these men are! They are welcoming us so affectionately!"

The fattest of them pleased the boy most. He said, "Let's go to his house mother, let's go with him."

The affection of the fat one was not disproportionate to his charges. But the boy could not realize this, and though the other two did, they were not willing to cross him in such a matter at such a time.

They drove in a hackney carriage to the bathing ghats on the bank of the river, the fat fellow describing all the while to the boy, the ancient town of Ujjain with all its glory.

"Will you show me the temple and the observatory too?" inquired the young one.

"That I will," replied the three-taken-together, "and much besides."

They all reached the bathing ghats and the dark Red one told the fat one the necessity of inducing away the boy for some time.

He raised his little finger, and four men ran to the spot. He chose one of them, and told him to guide the young one through the various memorable sights of old Ujjain.

And the boy would have agreed to go with him too. But he found a dark cloud over his mother's aspect, and large white drops were already pouring down her large blue eyes.

"I'll not leave my mother alone," said the boy clinging to her side as best as he could.

The old lady and the fat man tried their best to dissuade him. But the boy remained as obstinate as ever. At last they both said in despair, "Let him stay; we must proceed."

One unintelligible syllable from the fat one's lips called forth half a dozen fellows with small boxes in their hands.

"Have you some sweets to give me?" asked the innocent one looking to those boxes for something to quench his increasing appetite for food.

But, instead of the life-giving food, there came out the destructive instrument from the box of one of them who was chosen for the occasion.

Now the fat one began to wax eloquent with his indistinct stuff, and the fellow with the box began to sharpen his instrument.

"Uncover your head," said the fat one, which injunction was more promptly obeyed by the boy than by the mother.

"Get aside, Sirrah," said the fat man with a contemptuous look.

"If he is not going to shave my hair, why has he come? He must, indeed, be a funny fellow if he believed that even women needed him," the boy retorted.

"We've nothing to do with you; so you better keep quiet," ordered the dark Red one.

The boy understood their intention as soon as he looked at the dark Red one this time. He had seen the members of this sisterhood many times before; but he had never thought over the matter as he now did.

"I'll never allow that man to touch my mother," he declared emphatically, "my father would never have allowed a stranger to touch my mother."

"You are a fool; you don't know these things," said the old lady, dragging the boy aside.

The boy refused to be dragged, and asked the barber to go away immediately. "If you

don't," he added spiritedly, "I'll cut your throat with your own razor."

"God will be angry if your mother does not shave her head after your father's death, my boy," said the fat man, in quite another key.

"But I cannot stand it now," said the boy's mother, "let me live as I am. Really, the barber is a stranger, and he shall not touch me !"

"Don't be silly, don't be a child," shouted the fat man and the old woman who claimed to know God's intentions about this world of ours.

"No, I cannot stand it; he's a stranger that I see before me !"

"Come, mother, let us go. God never asked you to do so; and if He did so, I will do the job for you but not this stranger ! God, surely, is not so cruel as to heap one sorrow upon another !"

She left the scene, accompanied by her son, while the old woman poured forth a flood of

abuse, and the fat man said she was damned for life, and the barber said her hair would be pulled out one by one in the next world.

The nemesis of such an irreligious act was not slow to follow. She was denied the privilege of her company by the dark Red one on the return journey. The other members of the society of the dark Red did not admit her. The white man of the temple declared her to be ineligible for serving as a cook, for which respectable profession all other members of the dark Red group were eminently suited. Water and food touched by her was declared unfit for the gods. She had to lead a life devoid of inspiration from the dark Red ones, and precept from the White one. She thus allowed her life to be utterly wasted and ruined simply for the trifling consideration of not allowing a stranger to touch her head and, perhaps, unconsciously her cheeks which had served as barometers registering all emotional flux during the lifetime of her husband. And when she died after a few years of calm, contented and useful life, the White ones

## ESSAYS

breathed a sigh of relief that their profession was no longer in peril, the dark Red ones were glad that they would continue to remain cooks, and the barbers were gratified to see that at least some persons of the other sex would still continue to remain their customers.

## MARRIAGE AND PARDA.

The traveller who has formed a very lofty and majestic idea of the *Tribeni Sangam* at Allahabad, is no doubt, a little surprised at the small proportions these mighty rivers take at the famous site. He continues to venerate the spot as one of the rare sights of natural beauty, though he does not find therein the exact corroboration of what he has read about the place in ancient Sanskrit literature. To add to this shock of mild surprise, there is further wanting proof of the propriety of the epithet '*Tribeni*,' when only two rivers seem to meet, and not three. He is informed that the third one is in a latent form, which does not satisfy him, though he has often not the courage to contradict what has been established by centuries of superstitious belief. He continues, like clever Jack in the old story, to believe that one and two make three !

These, and such other thoughts were occupying my mind while I was loitering there-

"I have married a masked figure," he replied, "and I know nothing about her!"

"Know nothing about her? How can that be?" said I.

"I know her father and her brother of course; but that is hardly knowing anything about her," he said.

"You must be knowing that she's a human being," interrupted a saucy fellow from the company.

"My friend, I cannot swear as much," mine host replied, "I dare not say she has eyes and ears and nose and mouth and hair—I guess she has hands and legs, for she walked some paces with me during the ceremony—all that I can definitely say is that she has height!"

We all burst out into a loud laugh at this expression of a husband's *definite* knowledge about his own wife.

"Of course, I have heard reports about her," he added, "my great grandmother says she's

pretty; and my cousin's second wife says she's well-behaved and all that. But this is not the same thing as knowing her myself. "

"Well, how tall is she ? " I asked, like Cleopatra, though without the slightest feeling of jealousy about me.

" The masked figure which I call my wife, " he replied, " would be as tall as this fellow without his big *safa*, " and he pointed his finger to his servant Ramdhan who accompanied him in the boat.

" If she's so tall, she must be a stately woman; and Radheshyam, you deserve to be congratulated, " I said.

By now we had reached the Jumna Bridge and were looking to our right where some boys were playing in the premises of Ewing Christian college. One of them came running to the bank as he spied us, and desired to be taken in.

" He's my old friend Jagmohan, " said mine host as we rowed towards the place where he

was standing, " but he is late, and must share the fate of late-comers. "

" Bones for the late-comers, " repeated mine host to Jagmohan, as he got in, " you are so late; you promised to join us at the *Sangam* and we find you here. We have nothing left for you; you must pay the penalty of delay. "

" I don't mind the bones, if the marrow be still in them, " he said, " I don't care for the feast, if your marriage has been a happy one. "

" I couldn't 'tell you that, " said the other. " There's a thick veil between me and my happiness which Time alone can penetrate. "

We all condemned the *Parda* system as being atrocious to the sentiments of youths, and parted with grave faces.

Two months later, when I was loitering on the site of the *Sangam*, I spied Radheshyam in a boat, with his former servant.

" Hello ! Radheshyam ! " I called out.

"Hello ! old boy I would you like to get in ? "

"Yes, if you will give me sweets this time too ! "

"Bones for the late-comers ! Have you forgotten that ? "

As I got in he repeated the same phrase. "You seem to be having something in that white packet ! surely, they can't be bones," I said. "They *are* bones, not for you, but for a late-comer like me ! "

"I don't catch your meaning!" I replied a little puzzled.

"My father gave these bones to me for going to meet my dying wife," he said in a grim tone. "You asked me last time whether I knew anything more about my wife; now, let me tell you, she had bones, too ! "

"Surely, you are not joking ? "

" Upon my word, they are the bones of the masked one. "

" You couldn't see her even when she was dying ? "

" No, I couldn't. " he said, " she lived in a mask and died in a mask too. Her death is like a newspaper obituary to me ! " .....and after a pause he added, " I am going to throw these bones into the *Sangam*. "

" This beautiful spot should have served you another turn, " said I, " It's a place of union and should give rise to union and not separation like this. They that have marked this spot as a repository for bones must needs be mistaken. The sea is the proper place for all such spoils. Whereas these two sisters, affectionately embracing each other are a symbol of life and not death. "

" You are quite right " he said, " this pretty spot has been much abused for centuries. If ever I have a wife again, I'll put this spot to a romantic use. I would tear down the parda and

publish to the world my consummate bliss in my wife's company here."

"My master!" interrupted Randhan, "will you tear down the Parda in the teeth of your father's opposition? I've lived with him and know how orthodox he is."

"Yes, boy, I am determined to do it!"

"And will you openly bring your wife here and row with her in the same boat?"

"Yes, that I will."

"And will you not feel shy of addressing her as your own when your friends are about you?" "I won't care even if they were mine enemies."

"Then, my lord, if you will pardon me, I am your wife, married to you by sacred rites two months ago. The tyranny of the parda has driven me to this."

"You surprise me, indeed! How could you get out of my father's house?"

" I gave a faithful substitute whose bones you are handling in that white packet. He was a young boy who served my father since his childhood, and who willingly exchanged his clothes for mine to relieve me of this tyranny. "

" And did not my people know it ? "  
 " How could they know it, my lord, when they had a substitute all right ? There's little difference between a masked man and a woman, especially when talking is strictly forbidden for considerations of propriety. "

" And they were really deceived ? "

" They were deceived, indeed, for they could not penetrate the parda. My lord, give me those bones; they are the remains of the faithful one who enabled my impatient self to live with you these two months. "

" And I'll live with you for ever, " said Radheshyam charmed by her sweet look and manner of speech—" But will you tear down the parda, my Lord ? "

“ I’d tear it down, even if it was made of the hide of the rhinoceros ! ”

“ Then, my lord, the *Tribeni* has been a place of union after all. ”

The moon was slowly coming up, which event inspired the superfluous part of the company to discreetly retire, leaving the two alone in the boat, under the lovely light. The two rivers continued to mingle as affectionately as before, without being scandalized by this breach of ancient custom ! The boat did continue to float over the water in spite of the terrible weight of sin lodged inside ! And, what is more, none kidnapped the lady after she had started going about unveiled !

## WAR AND HUMAN SENTIMENT

Whatever might be said of the Great War in its economic or political aspect, there can be little doubt that in the sphere of human affections it wrought a terrible havoc. Especially in India, the effects were heightened owing to the background of calm and peace of over sixty years. During this period, since the time of the Indian Mutiny, Indians had been leading a peaceful life; they were like the Englishmen of 1685, described by Lord Macaulay, who had heard about wars only from their grandmother's lips, or read the accounts of fights in books, or seen soldiers in pictures ! And so the shock, when it came in 1914, was too much to bear owing to its novelty and mystery.

Rupmati was otherwise a brave lady; but it was too much to expect that she would patiently bear the shock of separation consequent upon her husband's departure for Europe for purposes of

the Great War. An ambitious young man, with plenty of nerve in him, he could not possibly back out at such a critical time when the prestige of the empire was at stake. Rupmati's importunities could be of no avail; she used every plausible argument; described from the Ramayana and Mahabharata the horrors of war; brought to his notice the fate of Indian widows; threatened him by saying that seas are several miles deep and augmented every argument with her most effective one, namely tears. But the young man had decided to go, and he could not be detained.

"But why do you think I'll never return?" he asked in an impatient tone.

"Because, my lord," she replied, "the greedy God of War knows no satiety. How many excellent youths He has devoured—Abhimanyu, Bishwas Rao and others; and He never allowed them to return for their wives' sakes."

"But I promise to return for thy sake, my dear," he said, comforting her, "and the wreath

of glory which I shall wear shall be put round thy neck. ”

“ Will you never fail me.”

“ No; upon my life I'll never ! ”

Thus luring away her doubts, the young man left for the battlefield of France.

Four long years of war held out every conceivable threat for Rupmati. Her neighbours would tell her of great ships sailing like clouds in the vicinity of the sun and the moon; of great bomb-shells destroying palaces and castles; of poison-gases which killed thousands at a time; while she would remember her husband's sustaining promise and would reply to them, “ My husband has more lives than the mouths of this great Hydra of War. He will surely come back to me. ”

Towards the close of 1918, the talk about ships like clouds, of bombshells, of howitzers, of poison-gases was suspended, and people began

to describe Utopias to her, saying. " The war is over; we have won; we shall have a blessed time of it now ! "

Rupmati's notion of a Utopia did not exclude the return of her husband; and so to her, the victory and all talk about it, seemed meaningless.

" When will my husband return with his crown of glory ? " she asked an important Government official.

" We do not know anything about him," he said, " either he's been killed, or taken captive to the enemy's camp. If he was to return, he should have done so by now. I don't think he'll return—'tis useless hoping against hope. "

" But he promised to return, " she said with feeling.

" Well, " retorted the other with a smile, " all promises cannot be kept. "

The government gave her a pension for her maintenance; but they could not give her back her husband. Everyone believed that he was killed; but she refused to entertain such a notion about him in view of his solemn promise at the time of their parting. Her mother came to her, one day, with tears in her eyes, and told her how death is the inevitable outcome of life, and that the soul does not die and so on; and, further, with great tenderness and sagacity advised her to break her bangles and efface the red vermilion mark on her forehead, and put on a red *sari*, as a mark of her widowhood. But Rupmati steadily refused to obey her, asserting all the while that her husband was alive.

“ I’ll put on the same type of *sari*, the same colour of bangles, the same faded blouse, these very ear-rings—” she said.

“ If you must put on this dress, better select some other variety; this colour of your *sari* does not look nice, ” said the mother.

"I'll not allow even the slightest change anywhere," she said emphatically, "I must look exactly as I did when he left me; I'll trim my hair in the same style; not diminish the size of the vermillion mark; nor change my *sari* for another of better variety. For should he come after this absence of five years, such a change would make identification very difficult for him."

With this idea she would go about everywhere, with her dark *sari* worn almost threadbare, her ear-rings tarnished, her blouse all but rags. "I *will* not change," she would repeat to herself, "for, then, he would not recognize me."

One day, as she was going by the side of a pond, she saw a man bending over it, eyeing, like Narcissus, his own image reflected in the water. He was so deeply immersed in thought that he remained unconscious of Rupmati's approach, till he was attracted by a rival figure on the surface of water.

"Shrikishen!" said Rupmati.

“ Yes ! ” he blurted out.

“ Ah, Shrikishen, dear, have you forgotten your promise ? — Your promise to return for my sake, ” she tried to remind the man.

“ You surprise me, indeed, gentle one; I’m afraid, you are labouring under a delusion. ”

“ Why ? are not you Shrikishen ? ” “ yes, my name is Shrikishen; but obviously, I am not the one you are seeking for. It is a very common name amongst us, and such a coincidence is nothing very wonderful. ”

“ You are jesting, you are not serious, you are playing with me, my dear ! ” she said, “ How could that be ? you, who have borrowed the name have borrowed the figure, too ? ”

“ Upon my word, I am not your Shrikishen.. I have a wife at home over there, who must be as anxiously awaiting me as you are awaiting your husband.

“ I have been doing so these five years !  
He’s gone to fight, and hasn’t returned. ”

“ Surely he’s killed. ”

“ O, don’t say so, don’t say so; he’s standing  
before me, and making a play-thing of me. ”

“ Surely, you are making a mistake. Was  
your husband as tall as myself ? ”

“ Not quite; but I know, you have gained in  
height, as you are bound to do. ”

“ And was he as fair as myself ? ”

“ No, not so fair; but I know, every one  
improves his complexion owing to the cold climate  
over there. ”

“ And was he so well-built as myself ? ”

“ No, not so stout; but I know life over  
there must have been very hard; and it has, no  
doubt, improved you every way ! ”

"Gentle one, believe me, it's a huge blunder ! In your fondness to meet your lost husband you are looking for resemblance where, probably, there is little, and explaining away, by your subtle reasoning, every obvious point of difference."

" I'll never be taken in, " she said angrily, " have you married another wife, and must you live with her and leave me ? And will you ignore all you promised when we parted ? I've heard, women are very pretty in those countries and young men fall in love with them and marry them; and then they cannot put up with homely Indian stuff ! Is't true ? Have you married a European lady ? "

" No, my wife is of mine own country ! "

" Is she more beautiful than myself ? "

" No, fair one, she cannot be said to be the proud possessor of your beauty. "

"Then why do you break my heart ? Will you disappoint me ? Will you defeat my hope ? I've

kindled her decaying fire with the very breath of my life. No, no, I'll not go like this. You *are* my Shrikishen; and if you are not, still marry me in his name, and I'll live with you in contentment. "

" Your beauty would make your husband proud of his treasure, fair one; but I cannot agree, for I have a wife, and children too ! "

" Then let me be your maid-servant. "

" My wife would be jealous of you, if you did; and people would go about with all types of scandal about us. By a maid-servant they understand homeliness, and not prettiness ! "

" Then there is but one way left ! If I can't get the substance I'll embrace the shadow ! and mind, I'll kiss you, and embrace you and be one with you ! "

With these words she jumped into the pool, as though trying to embrace the man's reflected image.

## WAR AND HUMAN SENTIMENT

If he had immediately followed her, he could have saved her; but her act was so unexpected that it overwhelmed him with surprise, and it took him some time to do the needful. But, then, it was too late; and he took her *dead* body out of the pond.

## PATIENCE ON A MONUMENT

I was introduced, the other day, to Mr. Kantilal who is now in his fifty-sixth year, and has been trying to get through the B. A. examination ever since he was twenty-two. This unique record has won him several titles, though the coveted one is not among them. The less polite among his acquaintances often call him "a chronic case of the B. A. Ward in the University Hospital; " while the gentler and more euphemistical ones use such expressions as "Patience on a Monument," or "Robert Bruce's Spider." They are of opinion that he is greatest among the unacknowledged donors of the University, since his contribution has already exceeded a thousand ! Only, he has paid it in instalments, and so forfeited his title to recognition. I could not, however, take such a lighthearted view of his failures, nor attribute them, as was generally done, either to dulness of intellect or lack of diligence; for on the ten-

minute talk we had, on our first meeting, I could easily judge that he was one of the most intelligent, well-read and sensible persons I had ever come across.

My curiosity getting the upper hand, I cancelled some of my less important engagements, the next day, to pay a visit to Mr. Kantilal's dwelling to find out, for myself, what had, all along stood in the way of his getting the simple B. A. degree. He welcomed me with becoming courtesy, and was not in the least disturbed, though I had scared it a good deal, when I broached the delicate subject. He never thought of his failures with anything distantly resembling a regret: on the contrary, he spoke as if he felt a little elated over them, and was more eager to explain, than I was to ask. why thirty-four years of effort had not borne the fruit which, in the ordinary course, took only two.

"You just have a look at my library, and draw your own conclusions. You will, perhaps, find the explanation of my failure there."

With this, he led me into another room walled with shelves on all sides, reaching up to the ceiling. They were all filled with books too numerous to be merely the accumulated text-books of the B. A. for the past thirty-four years. I found the collection very good indeed; for it included all the important poets since Chaucer, prose writers since Malory, and dramatists since Lyly. I found one shelf, in particular, very interesting, for it contained most of my favourites: Shakespeare, Sir Thomas Browne, Addison and Steele, Goldsmith and Sheridan, Lamb and Hazlitt, the Romantic Poets, Pickwick, Esmond, and *Virginibus Puerisque*. I congratulated the owner of this rich treasure house, and ventured to ask whether he had read all that the favourite shelf had garnered.

"You talk of one shelf? I have read the whole collection! Open any volume at will, as though you wished to have *sortes Virgilianae*, and you will find marginal notes in my hand, in the manner of S. T. C."

"I now see," said I, "why you have not been doing well at the B. A. Exam. Such an extensive study will leave no time for concentrating on a few text-books. Am I correct?"

"I'm afraid, you are not. I'll tell you. You must have marked a strange omission in this representative collection: I mean of Critical books. That's the reason. It has always pleased me to approach Literature directly, not with the assistance of these so-called guides or torch-bearers."

"That's still better: you can't really enjoy Literature otherwise. But, how has that come in your way? I should think, it helps a man to read the original instead of the comment."

"It may help the *man*, but not the *candidate* for an Exam. You see, when you read for yourself, you form your own impressions. If these happen to go against the dogmas of the examiner, he promptly marks you down. Take for example the Character of Othello. We were

asked to discuss it in the '33 Paper. What do you think I wrote ? I expressed my open contempt of Othello the man, Othello the lover, Othello the husband ! I could not call him noble. I thought him unworthy of Desdemona ! ”

“ You really say so ? ”

“ I say it, and I mean every word of it. Take that scene where Cassio is talking familiarly to Bianca, but is believed by Othello to be courting Desdemona. Even the mildest of husbands will go mad with rage and strike the Rival under these conditions; else, he will challenge him to a single combat, and so vindicate his honour. Othello is a soldier, a man of action. He could strike Desdemona in the presence of so many; cannot he strike Cassio who is thus dishonouring him under his very nose ? He has identified the missing handkerchief; no more proof is needed. Why delay, then ? Even Hamlet would not delay thus. We know how quick he could be, when it was a question of Ophelia's love. I don't understand why Othello

should bear all. *He* deserves to be called *Patience on a Monument*, and not one like myself !”  
The whole thing seemsto me to be so unnatural !

“ Again, he won’t avenge dishonour, himself; he will do it by proxy ! He will leave Cassio to Iago, and himself punish Desdemona. As if he could not punish both; as if Desdemona would have run away if he went after Cassio ! I don’t see the nobility of this great design. No honourable man would condescend to do what this so-called noble Moor did. You will argue that Iago did it, not he; for he was merely a tool in his hands. I may grant this in other matters, not where honour is involved. No man of honour or self-respect will agree to avenge such a wrong by proxy !

“ Suicide in Othello’s case is no merit. It would have been an honourable act if Othello had already contemplated it. He did nothing of the kind. On the contrary, he still hoped to rule the island after punishing Desdemona and Cassio, with Iago as second in command ! I can

understand Romeo dying for Juliet; I can understand Antony kissing away a whole empire for the sake of Cleopatra ! But I cannot understand this *noble Moor* who makes such a protestation of love and yet continues to covet the governorship of a puny isle, after his "occupation is gone," after his Lady has deserted him. Is it not ridiculous in the highest degree ? Let others say what they will; to me, Othello's suicide seems but a virtue out of necessity. If he did not kill himself, the Duke and Senators would, perhaps, have done it, in the interests of Justice. If a murderer commits suicide to escape the hangman, I won't at once proceed to deify him.

"The fact is, Othello is very brave on the battlefield; but that is all. He has not the culture and refinement of the civilized man about him. His feeling, though powerful, is still crude; his understanding of men's minds and motives 'unschooled.' He is a refined savage, if you like; but not a cultured gentleman ! The Senators honour him because his services are of vital

import from the military point of view. It is this that makes them connive at the white Lady's elopement with him. He has been unusually lucky in getting the romantically disposed Desdemona to admire him for his deeds of valour. I don't say they are yarns; perhaps, they are all statements of fact. Yet, I don't agree that Desdemona saw Othello's colour in his mind. She could not have done it, for all was fascination from start to finish. She looked upon him as a hero; he looked upon her as a goddess ! She continued in her romantic strain to the very end, telling a lie on her death-bed, which was nobly done; he, however, was disillusioned soon, for the inferiority complex was always there. The Beauty Fever had lulled it for a while; but the hard realism of Iago, acting like an antidote, cured the delirious patient, and re-established the same inferiority complex with a vengeance. He fretted and fumed; but the *fever* would not come again. If both had been simultaneously disillusioned, the end would not have been tragic. What made it so was that the *goddess*

## PATIENCE ON A MONUMENT

was sooner dethroned than the *hero* ! I have put it rather strongly; it may admit of dilution. But, don't you think I'm substantially correct ? "

We had no time to discuss the matter at length. I, however, agreed with him that his was the correct way to study and enjoy literature, namely by a direct approach, instead of the so-called *sign post* criticism leading this way and that; congratulated him on his originality; assured him that he would always find in me a sympathetic friend, and staunch admirer, for like Browning, I prized *the doubt*; regretted that there was little scope for independent thinking in the defective system of examinations; and, in the end, expressed a hope that he would profitably seek for other outlets than the answer-book for such striking and unconventional valuation of literature.